10th ICCMI
International Conference on Contemporary Marketing Issues

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

8 - 10 July
NAXOS/GREECE/2022

Venue:
Cultural Center of Naxos
(former Ursuline School)

co-organized by:

ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI
Chair of International Business,
Department of Marketing and
International Business, University
of Vienna, Austria

universität WİEN

Department of Business
Administration, School of
Economics, Aristotle University
of Thessaloniki, Greece

conference secretariat:

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www.iccmi2022.org
10TH International Conference on Contemporary Marketing Issues.
(10TH ICCMI 2022, 8-10 July 2022, Naxos, Greece (E-BOOK).
co-Organized by Department of Business Administration, School of Economics, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece and Chair of International Business, Department of Marketing and International Business, University of Vienna, Austria.
Editor: Christina Boutsouki, co-Chair of 10TH ICCMI 2022.
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Includes bibliographical references.
Preface

We welcome you to the 10th “International Conference on Contemporary Marketing Issues” (ICCMI 2022) co-organized by the Department of Business Administration, School of Economics, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece and the Chair of International Business, Department of Marketing and International Business, University of Vienna, Austria. The 10th ICCMI is hosted in Naxos, Greece, from July 8th, to July 10th, 2022.

The idea to organize this conference goes a long way back but it materialized, for the first time, seven years ago. The 1st ICCMI was held in June, 2012 in Thessaloniki, Greece, jointly organized by the Alexander TEI of Thessaloniki along with Bucks New University of UK. The 2nd ICCMI was held in Athens, Greece, in June 2014, a collaboration of the Alexander TEI with Manchester Metropolitan University. The 3rd ICCMI was organized by ATEI of Thessaloniki and Kingston University of the UK and was held in Kingston, UK, in June 2015. The 4th ICCMI, a collaboration between Manchester Metropolitan University and the ATEI of Thessaloniki, was held in Heraklion, in the beautiful island of Crete, in 2016. In addition there was the special session in Santorini with a very interesting workshop. The 5th ICCMI was jointly organized by Alexander TEI of Thessaloniki and Manchester Metropolitan University and was held in Thessaloniki with a special session in Chalkidiki. The 6th ICCMI was organized again by ATEI and Manchester Metropolitan University and was held in Athens Greece again. The 7th ICCMI was held again in Heraklion, Crete, in 2019 and was organized by Leeds University Business School and the International Hellenic University. The 8th and 9th ICCMIs, held respectively in 2020 and 2021, were run online due to the pandemic. Both were a collaboration between Adam Smith Business School of the University of Glasgow and the International Hellenic University.

During this year’s conference there will be very interesting presentations in the fields of Marketing and Tourism as well as in Management. The manuscripts submitted have been included, after review, in the conference proceedings.

This year’s Conference is supported by notable scholars comprising the international advisory scientific board and the international scientific committee. Furthermore, the quality of the Conference is enhanced by a number of prestigious journals offering publication opportunities to a selected number of outstanding, high quality, papers submitted to ICCMI 2022.

This year we are honoured to have with us, as Keynote Speaker, Professor George Balabanis. He is Professor of Marketing at Bayes Business School (formerly Cass) of the City University of London, UK. We warmly thank him for his great contribution to the success of the Conference.

We also express our sincere gratitude and thanks to the two universities, i.e. the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the University of Vienna, to the international advisory scientific board and to the international scientific committee members who ensured the quality of the papers. In addition we thank the collaborating journals’ editors for their willingness to contribute to the success of the conference, the papers’ authors for their paper submitted and all the conference delegates who came to Naxos to participate in the event.

Finally, our thanks are extended to the Municipality of Naxos and small Cyclades who kindly offered the venue of the conference and to msquare, the company behind the technical organization of the conference.

As the conference co-Chairs we would like to welcome you and assure you that it is a great honour for us to have all of you here.

Christina Boutsouki  
Professor  
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece  
ICCMI 2022 co-Chair

Emmanuella Plakoyiannaki  
Professor/Chair of International Business  
University of Vienna, Austria  
ICCMI 2022 co-Chair

Christos Sarmaniotis  
Professor Emeritus  
International Hellenic University, Greece  
ICCMI 2022 co-Chair
### Committees

#### Co-Chairs

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#### Organizing Committee

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Stakeholder and business owners’ opinions regarding tourism development in Crete - A qualitative study
Advertising
Green Advertising's Impact on Consumers’ Attitudes and Purchase Intention: An Application of Prospect Theory

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The study aims to investigate the effect of green advertising type on consumer choice. Kahneman and Tverky's prospect theory provides the theoretical basis for the study. To date, in the field of green advertising and the prospect theory, there is limited research on the effect of type of advertising (gain/loss message) on consumer choice. Prior research addressed how the type of advertising affects the adoption of green behaviors and the promotion of environmental concerns. Considering that the prospect theory assesses risk situations, the effect of green advertising type on risky choices such as green energy consumption is tested. Based on the results of the study, the type of green advertising (gain/loss message) affects the consumer’s choice (high/low priced service) while at the same time, the consumer’s profile (green/non green) has a significant effect on the selected service price.

Keywords: green advertising, prospect theory, message framing

Introduction

Green advertising and green marketing are an ever-growing research field (Chan, 2000; C.-T. Chang, 2012; C. Chang, 2011; Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibañez, 2009; Kong & Zhang, 2014; Schuhwerk & Lefkoff-Hagius, 1995). At the same time, in recent years there has been an increase in the interest of both companies and consumers around green marketing and sustainability in general (Analysts, 2013). Green advertising includes "promotional messages that can address the needs and desires of consumers interested in the environment" (Zinkhan & Carlson, 1995).

Research in the field of green advertising and specifically about the type of advertising although extensive, has focused on how the ad is framed (positive or negative) when the content addresses environmental issues (H. Chang, Zhang, & Xie, 2015; White, Macdonnell, & Dahl, 2011). According to the Prospect Theory, individuals react differently to the same information when it is framed by a positive (gain-framed) or a negative message (loss-framed) (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). Despite its popularity and widespread use, the Prospect Theory has not, to the best of our knowledge, been applied to risky product or service choice, even though the theory aims to describe such behaviors in similar situations.

Hence, the present study uses the Prospect Theory to examine the effect of an advertising message’s presentation (reward or loss) of a high-risk service, influences consumer’s choice (low or high price). In addition, the study considers the green consumer’s profile as an additional factor affecting consumer choice. The findings yield useful guidelines for the development of effective green advertising messages.

Literature Review

Green Advertising

Banerjee et. al (1995) define green advertising as any form of advertising that emphasizes the relationship between a product or service and the biophysical environment. Green advertising is not limited to the placement of environmentally friendly products (Kangis, 1992), but at the same time, it supports and promotes a green
lifestyle and creates an image of responsibility. Green advertising should be treated as a type of advertising that in addition to promoting the product should give equal weight to the production method (Papadopoulos, Karagouni, Trigkas, & Platogianni, 2010).

Green advertising serves as a tool for companies to highlight their environmental identity and act (Haytko & Matulich, 2008). At the same time, consumers in recent years become more demanding in terms of their environmental requirements. Companies are adapting to these requirements and seem to respect the wishes, needs and beliefs of consumers. Businesses respond to consumer desires and adopt appropriate environmental sensitivity (Y.-S. Chen, 2008; Chitra, 2007; Erdman, 2008).

In the field of green marketing and green advertising, significant research has been done on consumer behavior. For example, proactive people about the environment and its protection tend to show a higher interest in green advertising (Bush 2008). In addition, the study of Haytko and Matulich (2008) highlights the effectiveness of green advertising against consumers who already adopt green views and environmental behaviors.

**Green Consumer**

Green consumers are defined as individuals who are aware of the green products, they consume for both packaging recycling and their environmental performance (Leonidou, Leonidou, & Kvasova, 2010). Especially after the increase of people's interest in the protection of the environment and the increase in sales of green products, more and more studies are being carried out to understand the green consumer.

According to Datta (2011), people who are concerned about the environment are prepared to buy eco-friendly products but not willing to pay a premium price for them. Others have found that customers who are concerned about the environment are willing to pay more for an ecologically friendly product (Royne, Levy, & Martinez, 2011). Environmental concern, according to Bamberg (2003), should not be considered as a direct component in affecting ecologically linked behaviors, but rather as an essential indirect element. Consumers who are concerned about the environment are more likely to be involved in the stated environmental issues (K. Lee, 2008). Consumer identification with the issue, according to Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy (1990), has a substantial impact on the effectiveness of favorably or negatively worded communications. When consumers engage in extensive thinking, they discovered that a loss framing is more persuasive.

Previous research has found that a person's level of interest in a topic predicts how they process pertinent information (Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991; Quintero Johnson, Harrison, & Quick, 2013). Consumers are more likely to analyze an ad message systematically if they believe it is personally relevant or addresses issues that they care about (Celsi & Olson, 1988; Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991; Quintero Johnson et al., 2013). A green commercial is more likely to resonate with consumers' dispositions to take the promoted issue seriously if they are worried about environmental issues in general. These 'high-concern' customers are more likely to pay attention to the advertisement and analyze the material more thoroughly. A green ad, on the other hand, is less relevant to consumers who are unconcerned about environmental issues and is fundamentally undesirable to them since they do not place a high value on the offered benefits or costs in the first place. Those with a low level of worry may find the green issue less engaging, and as a result, they may not digest the ad message as thoroughly as they would if the offered product did not meet their needs.

**Prospect Theory**

According to Prospect Theory, individuals respond differently to objectively identical information depending on whether the information emphasizes strengths (i.e., gain-frames) or disadvantages (i.e., loss-frames) (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). The prospect theory has been evaluated to a limited extent in the field of green marketing. Research around prospect theory and green advertising focuses mainly on the image and the advertising message about the environment, i.e., what it gains or losses from the product (J. Lee & Cho, 2021).

Previous research has demonstrated that winning and losing framings affect people's attention and understanding of information before they decide (Meyers-Levy & Maheswaran, 2004). Researchers have looked at the effectiveness of persuasive messages about winning and losing in a variety of contexts, including smoking cessation (Goodall & Appiah, 2008; Toll et al., 2008), disease prevention behaviors (Latimer, Salovey, & Rothman, 2007; O'Keefe & Jensen, 2007), and consumer willingness to recycle (White et al., 2011). Also, Prospect Theory has so far been examined mostly in terms of how it can lead to the adoption of green habits and behaviors (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2013).

Based on the Prospect Theory, we assume that the consumer, when exposed to messages related to what they expect to win from an option, will select the product with the lower benefit and price. Conversely, when the consumer is exposed to messages related to the loss that comes with an option at a given moment, they will pick the option with the highest benefit and price. Therefore, the following research question arises

**H1a.** When the advertising message presents the purchase of the service as a reward, consumers prefer
the service with the lowest price.

H1b. When the advertising message presents the purchase of the service as a loss, consumers prefer the service with the highest price.

Methodology

Study

A 2 (gain: high / low) x 2 (loss: high / low) experiment was used for the purposes of the study. The experiment was conducted in two groups of participants. Two questionnaires with two ads each were used. Participants in each group were presented with one questionnaire and viewed two ads created solely for the purposes of the study. The size of the ads was similar to social media posts. The advertising company “Green Power” is a virtual company, unknown to the consumer public. The ads in the first questionnaire referred to the context of profit while in the second questionnaire they referred to loss. The two ads referring to profit (see Appendix 1), indicate the percentage of energy saved by the consumer and the monthly cost of the program. In the first advertisement the price is low, while in the second advertisement it is high. The ad text, aimed to create emotions related to saving and benefits, such as "you helped too", "save". In the second questionnaire the two ads referred to the energy loss consumers were facing (see Appendix 2). Unlike the profit ads, the percentage of energy wasted by the consumer due to lack of solar panels and the monthly cost of the service are shown. Similar to the previous ads, the first one promotes a low-price program, and the second a more expensive one. Regarding the vocabulary used, words related to the loss were chosen, like "stop wasting" and "charge". To ensure maximum reliability of the survey, the four ads as well as the scales used in the questionnaires did not differ from each other. The advertising images used were simple with an emphasis on the message. The aim was not to evoke any emotion related to the image.

Procedure

Overall, 156 people (60.09% women) participated in the online experiment. Questionnaires were distributed online using Google Forms. The research was conducted in Greece. Over half of the subjects (54.50%) were between 25 and 34 years while 48.10% hold a bachelor’s degree. Also, 54.50% of the participants work in the private sector and 45.50% have an income of 10,001-30,000 euros. Regarding the use of solar panels, the research shows that only 6.4% of participants have installed them.

Measures

A principal element of the research is the consumer profile of the participants. The questionnaire used validated scales with 5-point Likert type items. The range of the answers was from 1 to 5, with 1 strongly agree and 5 strongly disagree. We used six questions from Haws, Winterich and Naylor (2014) Green Consumption Values to check the consumer profile of the participants. Responses to all six items were averaged into one scale (a=0.86). As the research focused on a green service, we used five questions from Banerjee and McKeage (1994) Green Value Scale to assess environmental attitudes. Responses to all five items were averaged to create a single index of green values (a=0.79). Also, the questions about the green habits and the green devices that the participants choose, were drawn from the research work on green consumption in Greece carried out by Maria Zavali and Eleni Theodoropoulou (2019). Finally, participants' self-identification as ethical / green consumers was tested using four structured questions (a=0.71) based on Tsalikis and Seaton’s work (2006).

Results

According to our hypotheses, there is a relationship between the cost of a service (higher / lower) and the type of advertisement (reward / loss). The independent t-test was selected to assess this case. Specifically, as H1 suggests, when the advertising message presented the purchase of the service as a reward, consumers tended to choose the service with the lowest price (M=1.51, SD=0.502). On the other hand, when the advertising message presented the purchase of the service as a loss, consumers prefer the service with the highest price (M=1.65, SD=0.482) (H1b). According to the results, the p value is 0.119 (slightly above 0.05) which suggests that our findings indicate the relationships suggested in hypotheses H1a and H1b but are not statistically significant.

Moreover, the analysis has shown that the type of advertising has a significant effect on the cost of the program (M=1.304, F = 6.744, p = 0.010 <0.05). On the contrary, the consumer profile does not seem to affect the cost of the program (M=0.266 F = 1.377, p = 0.242> 0.05). A significant relationship was observed.
between the consumer profile (green & non-green) and the type of advertising in the cost of the program (M=0.285, F = 4.407, p = 0.037 <0.05). In green consumers, there is little difference between the means of reward advertising messages (M = 0.23, SD = 0.422) and the means of loss advertising messages (M = 0.28, SD = 0.452). In contrast, non-green consumers are very differentiated between reward (M=0.13, SD=0.354) and loss advertising messages (M=0.64, SD=0.505).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Two-way ANOVA Test</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message-Framing</td>
<td>6.74</td>
<td>0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer * Message</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.037</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Two-way ANOVA Test*

Discussion

The main objective of the study was to investigate the effect of the type of green advertising on consumer choice to promote high-risk green services based on the prospect theory. The results of the study suggest that Prospect Theory demonstrates a trend of being applicable to green advertising. The profile of the consumer coupled with the type of the advertisement seemed to affect the choices of consumers about the cost of the service they choose. This finding is confirmed by previous studies on issue involvement. Specifically, the consumer’s profile and its involvement with an issue, in our case the environment and its protection, leads to more cautious choices (Bae, 2008; Dhanesh & Nekmat, 2019). At the same time, our findings are supported by the work of other researchers, who correlate consumer’s issue involvement with the environment, with their purchasing attitudes (T. B. Chen & Chai, 2010; Schuhwerk & Lefkoff-Hagius, 1995; Shin, Ki, & Griffin, 2017). Moreover, from the research findings it is understood that consumers with low or no environmental awareness choose the service with the highest price in advertising loss messages. According to the prospect theory, this happens when consumers consider the purchase as risky. Consumers show a tendency to be willing to buy green products however the final market is defined by price, quality, and convenience (Deloitte, 2020). Also, there is a contrast or otherwise a gap between awareness and the final action (Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, Sinkovics, & Bohlen, 2003). However, the degree of environmental awareness is the most important factor in buying green products.

The choice of non-green consumers is also confirmed by published literature. According to Aasha Sharma (2015), there are 5 categories of green consumers, based on the environmental sensitivity of the consumers. Consumers with no or little environmental sensitivity have two different profiles: The first consumer profile includes those with little concern about the environment, who will proceed in purchasing green products based only on personal benefit. The second profile includes those with no environmental concerns. Due to their lack of appropriate information about green products, these consumers consider the purchase of such products risky and will not buy them. Nevertheless, our results indicate that the type of the advertising message could potentially affect the choice of non-green consumers and lead them to purchase green products. At the same time, the general ignorance of consumers about green products and services further enhances their sense economic risk and risk aversion. In addition, the work of other groups confirms that the more the sense of economic risk diminishes, the more consumers will purchase green products (March & Sevon, 1988; Rachlin, Logue, Gibson, & Frankel, 1986; Schmitt & Whitmeyer, 1990).

Implications

This study seeks to contribute to academic research on advertising. Initially, it provides a better understanding of the application of prospect theory to green advertising industry, without taking into account images and other elements. At the same time, the research reinforces the results of previous work (H. Chang et al., 2015; White et al., 2011) on the impact of the consumer profile and its identification with environmental protection on consumer purchasing behavior.

In addition, our study’s results can be a useful tool for advertisers to better promote green products and services. According to our findings, advertisers should pay the necessary attention to the way messages are framed and the profile of consumers.

Limitations and future research

The findings of the study should be analyzed in the light of its limitations. Initially, our sample, although randomly selected, may not be fully representative of the population. Analysis of its demographics showed that the majority were women and most of them belonged to the 25-35 age group. At the same time,
the largest percentage of participants had high level education and most of them worked in the private sector. Therefore, it is necessary for future research to repeat the study on a larger sample with a better population distribution.

In addition, the study ruled out additional controlling elements of the advertisement, such as the image and the emotions it creates. Future studies may consider testing the prospect theory green advertising in conjunction with the effect of emotions.

References


Appendix 1: Ads for gain message-framing

Appendix 2: Ads for loss message-framing
Join our new solar energy supply service!

Stop wasting 10% more electricity every month, with the Green Power program and the installation of solar panels.

PRICE 100€ /MONTH
You can help too in the sustainable development of the planet!
So far, you’ve been burdening the planet with 2.53tn of CO2 emissions. You can stop it!

Join our new solar energy supply service!

Stop wasting 20% more electricity every month, with the Green Power program and the installation of solar panels.

PRICE 200€ /MONTH
You can help too in the sustainable development of the planet!
So far, you’ve been burdening the planet with 5tn of CO2 emissions. You can stop it!
Student Attitudes Towards the use of a Virtual Learning Environment as an Advertising Platform

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Abstract
As Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), internationally, and in South Africa, particularly, begin to devise means by which to decrease costs and increase revenue, the use of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), which most HEIs have already adopted, may be the key. By including advertisements onto VLEs, HEIs can potentially reduce the significant financial costs associated with the implementation, utilisation and maintenance required for their chosen VLEs, without decreasing the value of the service provided, while simultaneously providing a source of long term sustainable revenue for HEIs. Given the financial implications, it can be suggested that HEIs consider the integration of advertisements onto their chosen VLEs, however there is a paucity in research investigating how the users of VLEs, mainly students, will respond to the presence of advertisements on VLEs. Attitudes play an important role in developing an understanding of the pre-determined perceptions of students towards a VLE. Therefore, should HEIs need to integrate advertisements onto the VLEs already in use within HEIs, then it is crucial to develop an understanding about the attitudes of students, registered at these HEIs, towards the use of these VLEs with the presence of advertisements. Consequently, the primary objective of this study was to investigate students’ attitudes towards the use of a VLE with the presence of advertisements at a South African university of technology. The sampling frame for this study comprised of a public registered South African university of technology. A non-probability convenience sample of 400 students was used. The statistical techniques employed to analyse the data include descriptive statistics, independent sample t-tests, a correlation matrix, collinearity diagnostics and a paired t-test. The findings in this study indicate that students possess self-efficacy in terms of the use of VLEs, have positive technology experience with the use of VLEs and are satisfied with the use of VLEs, holding positive associations with regards to the ease of use of VLEs and the usefulness of VLEs. Furthermore, students have positive attitudes towards the use of VLEs without the presence of advertisements, as well as positive attitudes towards the use of VLEs with the presence of advertisements. This study contributes towards the literature concerning students’ attitudes towards advertising on VLEs, in both the South African and global context.

Keywords: e-learning, virtual learning environment, advertising, attitudes, students, technology experience, self-efficacy, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use

Introduction
According to Watson (2006:367), students and educators have been witness to how technology has altered the higher education platform. This includes the introduction of virtual learning environments (VLEs), which HEIs have employed in an effort to support and enhance student learning. Browne, Jenkins and Walker (2006:182) add that the majority of HEIs, situated in the United Kingdom (UK) and around the globe, now support students’ learning via VLEs. Given the financial costs required for the implementation, operation and updates of VLEs, HEIs that have already implemented VLEs may find it financially beneficial to use these VLEs as a tool for increasing revenue (Ogba et al., 2012:64).

Browne (2010:207) theorises that HEIs, around the world and in South Africa in particular, need to look at austerity measures and ways in which they can increase revenue if they wish to survive. As such, the VLEs already employed in most HEIs may be the key. By incorporating advertisements onto VLEs, HEIs have the opportunity to reduce the significant financial costs associated with the use of VLEs, without decreasing the value of the service provided, which could supply HEIs with a source of long-term sustainable revenue. Given the financial implications, it can be suggested that HEIs consider the integration of advertisements onto their
chosen VLEs, however there is a paucity in research investigating how the users of VLEs, mainly students, will respond to the presence of advertisements on VLEs (Ogba et al., 2012:64). Although a study has been conducted on predicting students’ attitudes towards advertising on HEI VLEs (Ogba et al., 2012:64), it was only undertaken in the United Kingdom. Other studies remotely related were mainly focused on students’ attitudes towards e-learning and did not investigate students’ attitudes towards the use of a VLE with the presence of advertisements (Mehra & Omidian, 2011:13; Pilli et al., 2014:169; Al-Said, 2015:167; Rhema & Miliszewska, 2014:169).

Attitudes play an important role in understanding the perceptions of students towards VLEs (Ogba et al., 2012:64). Consequently, for HEIs looking to incorporate advertisements onto the VLEs employed within HEIs, it is paramount that they develop an understanding of students’ attitudes, who are enrolled at these HEIs, towards the use of VLEs with the presence of advertisements. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to investigate students’ attitudes towards the use of a VLE with the presence of advertisements at a South African university of technology.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy involves an individual’s perception regarding their competencies and performance levels at various life stages, which may contribute to instances of life changing moments (Bandura, 1994:71; Akhtar, 2008). Technology self-efficacy encapsulates an individual’s self-assessment of their capability to employ the use of technology, such as computers, to complete specific tasks (Compeau & Higgins, 1995:191; Akhtar, 2008). It was found that the greater an individual's computer self-efficacy is, the greater their use of computers and technology will be (Compeau & Higgins, 1995:196; Al-Busaidi, 2013:1171). Consequently, a student’s perception of their own self-efficacy, in terms of the use of technology, is believed to influence their intention to use and engage in the use of a VLE, where computerised self-efficacy is seen to be greatly related to the acceptance of a VLE (Roca, Chiu & Martinez, 2006; Cheng, 2011). In conclusion, students that have higher levels of self-efficacy with regards to VLEs are believed to be more prone to use VLEs, whereas students who have lower levels of self-efficacy may avoid using VLEs altogether (Lee, 2006:523; Hsia, Chang & Tseng, 2008:52; Yuen & Ma, 2008:233; Moghadam & Bairamzadeh, 2009:1660).

Technological experience

Thompson, Compeau and Higgins (2006:30) indicate that technology experience is an individual’s exposure to skills, abilities and services that are gained by using technology. Wan, Fang and Neufeld (2007:185) highlight that in the educational environment, students’ technology experience has a significant impact on learning outcomes and learning processes. Murshitha and Wickramarachchi (2016:18) propose that a student’s technology experience plays a pivotal role in how effective students engage with technology in the educational environment. Similarly, Al-Busaidi (2013:1171) adds that the more technology experience a student has, the more likely they will be accustomed to the use of technology for educational purposes and activities and the more students will perceive it as useful and an easy tool to use. As such, students with high degrees of technology experience, are believed to possess more favourable perceptions towards the usefulness and the ease of use of VLEs (Purnomo & Lee, 2013:565). Murshitha and Wickramarachchi (2016:21) argue that a strong positive relationship exists between a student’s technology experience and their adoption of VLEs. Furthermore, Punnoose (2012:314) theorises that students with prior e-learning experience and better computer skills, have stronger intentions to use e-learning when the opportunity presents itself. Šumak, Heričko and Pušnik (2011:2070) conclude that students’ actual application of technology is strongly inclined by their behavioural intention, which in turn is influenced by their prior experience with the technology in question.

Perceived ease of use

The theoretical grounding for this study was the technology acceptance model (TAM) of Davis et al. (1989:985), where perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use may be deemed as the two fundamental determinants of an individual’s acceptance to use technology, such as a VLE. Suki and Suki (2011:55) and Fathema, Shannon and Ross (2015:227) theorise that when an individual views technology as easy to use, there is an increased likelihood that these individuals will perceive that technology as useful, leading to positive attitudes towards the use of a particular technology and the increased likelihood to use the technology in question, similarly influencing the actual use of the technology, namely a VLE. Renny, Guritno and Siringoringo (2013:212) articulate that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use influence the attitudes of individuals towards the use of a particular technology, where perceived usefulness is viewed as the strongest role player in the shaping of individuals’ attitudes towards the use of technology. Pilli et al. (2014:174) theorise perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as antecedents that significantly influence student attitudes towards the use of e-learning, which is in line with the findings of Davis (1989) and Al-Adwan et al. (2013:11).
Perceived usefulness
Perceived usefulness is deemed the degree to which an individual accepts that using a specific framework would enhance their performance activity (Davis, 1989:320; Hussain et al., 2016:2). In the field of innovation acceptance, there has been significant research conducted on perceived usefulness (Liao & Cheung, 2002:287; Eriksson, Kerem & Nilsson, 2005:204; Laforet & Li, 2005:369; Polatoglu & Ekin, 200:157; Guriting & Ndubisi, 2006:9). According to Pekka (2007:97), students may develop a perspective on how significant a technological advancement is in performing certain activities, including how helpful the technology may be in terms of time saving capabilities and various constructs the user may use to evaluate the technology in question. The student may acknowledge that a given technological innovation is useful, yet while utilising the innovation, the student may discover that it might be difficult to use, which in turn influences their degree of acceptance (Kjeldskov, Skov, Als & Hoegh, 2004:62).

Satisfaction
Delone and McLean (2003:16) articulate satisfaction as the degree to which an individual is pleased or content with a product or service. Satisfaction has been proven to be useful in evaluating the influence of information structures and has been noted as the leading influencer in intention to use technological innovations (Yoon, Guimaraes & O’Neal, 1995:89; Negasha, Ryan & Igbari, 2003:757; Kassim, Jailani, Hairuddin & Zamzuri, 2012:412). With regards to VLEs, satisfaction may be dubbed the extent to which students may feel pleased or content with the use and implementation of a VLE on a full scale (Sun, Tsai, Finger, Chen & Yeh, 2008:6). Devaraj, Fan and Kohli (2003:318) and Pavlou (2003:108) conclude that students’ have a favourable feeling of satisfaction with regards to VLEs when VLEs are perceived as useful and easy to use.

The presence of advertisements on virtual learning environments
Johnston (2017) suggests that with the use of a VLE, registered students at HEIs have access to the same material, at the same time, where the material can remain on the VLE for as long as it is needed. This functionality highlights the possibility for VLEs to become an effective and efficient platform to advertise institutional campaigns and functions, without having to account for the costs associated with the printing of advertisements, which in turn have to be distributed or attached to notice boards, which often go unnoticed or get discarded the moment they are received by the recipients, namely students. By placing these advertisements on VLEs, there is minimal to no cost involved, where all students have access to the advertisements and can refer to them at any time, leading to increased coverage and the higher potential for a more positive response and participation rate. Criteria used by individuals to judge advertising, both in the traditional sense and on the Internet, are the same, which includes how entertaining, informative and useful an advertisement is in relation to how it will inform an individual’s purchase decisions (Gong & Maddox, 2003:11). As such, for HEIs that wish to incorporate advertisements onto VLEs that creates positive student attitudes, the advertisements should be both informative and entertaining (Ogba et al., 2012:66). The study conducted by Ogba et al. in the United Kingdom at Northumbria University (2012), concluded that when adding advertisements onto a VLE within a HEI, the students, who make use of the VLE, possess positive attitudes towards the use of the VLE with the presence of advertisements. Unfortunately, there is a paucity in research on student attitudes towards the use of VLEs with the presence of advertisements in recent years, as well as in other countries and HEIs.

Research Design and Methodology
The sampling frame of this research study was based on the list of 26 public, registered HEIs in South Africa (Universities South Africa, 2018). A non-probability convenience sample was used in this study, where one HEI, located in the Gauteng province, was selected. Lecturers from each of the four faculties, namely the Faculty of Management Sciences, the Faculty of Applied and Computer Sciences, the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Human Sciences at the South African university of technology, were contacted requesting assistance for the lecturers to ask their students to complete the questionnaire. The lecturers were informed that completion of the questionnaire was completely voluntary and that no student was to be forced into completing the questionnaire. When permission was granted, a hand-delivered, self-administered questionnaire was distributed to full-time students during class time at the chosen HEI. The sample size for this study was set at 400 full-time students, divided equally between the four faculties within the chosen HEI, thereby allowing a sample size of 100 full-time students per faculty. This research study was undertaken amongst full-time registered students, aged between 17 and 38 years. Due to geographical, cost and time restrictions, the study was limited to one HEI located in the Gauteng province of South Africa. The measuring scale used in this study was decided using adapted scales from Ogba et al. (2012:71), Al-Busaidi (2013:1173), Pilli et al. (2014:172) and Dos Santos and Okazaki (2016:1993). The questionnaire included four sections, namely Section A, Section B, Section C and Section D. Section A was used to collect demographic data. Section B constituted two constructs used to measure the influence student factors have on students’ intentions to use VLEs, adapted from the scale of Al-Busaidi
(2013:1173). The first construct (three items) measured student self-efficacy and the second construct (three items) measured technology experience. Section C constituted three constructs used to measure the influence of the factors influencing students’ adoption of VLEs in blended learning on students’ intentions to use VLEs, adapted from the scale of Al-Busaidi (2013:1173). The first construct (three items) measured perceived ease of use, the second construct (six items) measured perceived usefulness and the third construct (three items) measured student satisfaction. Section D, with eight items, was used to measure students’ perceptions regarding the presence of advertisements on VLEs, adapted from the scale used by Ogba et al. (2012:71).

**Hypotheses**

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy, technology experience, satisfaction and students’ attitudes towards the use of a VLE with the presence of advertisements.

H2: There is a statistically significant relationship between perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and attitudes towards the use of a VLE with the presence of advertisements.

H3: There is a statistically significant relationship between attitudes towards the use of a VLE without the presence of advertisements and attitudes towards the use of a VLE with the presence of advertisements.

H4: There is a statistical difference between students’ attitudes towards the use of a VLE without the presence of advertisements and students’ attitudes towards the use of a VLE with the presence of advertisements.

**Results**

As per Table 1, only four of the seven constructs recorded Cronbach alpha values of more than 0.70. Accordingly, for scales with less than ten items, which is the case for all three constructs that did not obtain a Cronbach alpha value of 0.70 or more, it is sometimes difficult to obtain Cronbach alpha values that are above the recommended 0.70 (Pallant, 2007:98). Therefore, it is recommended that researchers make use of the inter-item correlation values to determine the reliability of a scale if such a scenario occurs. In order to measure the validity, the average inter-item correlations were calculated. For the three constructs, which did not obtain a 0.70 or higher Cronbach alpha value, average inter-item correlations between 0.322 and 0.385 were achieved, indicating that this scale was in fact reliable and valid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Valid N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology experience</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived ease of use</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived usefulness</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre advert presence</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post advert presence</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the purpose of this study, a six-point Likert scale was employed, which ranged from 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree, where higher mean values are associated with greater agreement among the sample students at the chosen South African University of Technology. As per Table 2, the number of usable, completed questionnaires is indicated by the valid N.
university of technology have strong positive attitudes towards their technology experience, the use of VLEs without the presence of advertisements and the perceived ease of use of VLEs. Mean values above 3.50 were computed for post-advertisement presence (mean = 3.98), self-efficacy (mean = 3.98), perceived usefulness (mean = 3.93) and satisfaction (mean = 3.91). This suggests that students have positive attitudes towards the use of VLEs with the presence of advertisements, as well as their self-efficacy in terms of using VLEs, their perceived usefulness of VLEs and their satisfaction with the use of VLEs.

The lowest standard deviations were recorded on pre-advertisement presence (St. Dev. = 1.00) and post-advertisement presence (St. Dev. = 1.13), indicating that there was less dispersion in students’ reported attitudes towards the use of VLEs without the presence of advertisements and the use of VLEs with the presence of advertisements. Higher standard deviations were recorded for technology experience (St. Dev. = 1.20), perceived usefulness (St. Dev. = 1.23), self-efficacy (St. Dev. = 1.26), perceived ease of use (St. Dev. = 1.31) and satisfaction (St. Dev. = 1.33). This indicates that there was greater dispersion in students’ attitudes towards their technology experience, including the perceived usefulness of VLEs, self-efficacy with regards to VLEs, their perceived ease of use regarding VLEs and their satisfaction with VLEs.

Correlation Analysis

Through constructing a matrix of construct correlations, researchers are able to assess the nomological validity of a proposed measurement model (Veiga, Moura & Higuchi, 2019:339). To determine nomological validity in this study, the Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficients between each pair of constructs was examined. The correlation matrix is presented in Table 5.

Table 3: Correlation matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology experience</td>
<td>0.495**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived ease of use</td>
<td>0.490**</td>
<td>0.676**</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Perceived usefulness</td>
<td>0.455**</td>
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<td>0.733**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.431**</td>
<td>0.615**</td>
<td>0.792**</td>
<td>0.789**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-advert presence</td>
<td>0.199**</td>
<td>0.312**</td>
<td>0.356**</td>
<td>0.364**</td>
<td>0.326**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-advert presence</td>
<td>0.237**</td>
<td>0.411**</td>
<td>0.450**</td>
<td>0.464**</td>
<td>0.446**</td>
<td>0.553**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

Table 3 summarises the correlation matrix, where the correlation values between all seven constructs, namely self-efficacy, technology experience, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, satisfaction, pre-advertisement presence and post-advertisement presence, fall within the range of 1 ≥ r ≥ -1. As such, all seven constructs are significant and within the accepted range. From the findings, nomological validity may be devised, suggesting that the relationships between all seven constructs are deemed significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis of H1, H2 and H3 are rejected and H1, H2 and H3, the alternatives, are concluded. The more positive attitudes students have towards the use of a VLE with the presence of advertisements, the greater their perceptions towards a VLE with the presence of advertisements will be.

In addition to nomological validity, multi-collinearity diagnostics were undertaken to test for any presence of multi-collinearity concerns. When conducting multivariate statistical techniques, it is imperative to check for multi-collinearity between independent factors. Consequently, SPSS Statistics Collin instruction was employed to evaluate if any multi-collinearity was present between the independent constructs. The case number was set as the dummy dependent variable.

The tolerance values and variance inflation factor (VIF) values of the independent variables were computed to detect for any multi-collinearity. Tolerance values lower than 0.10 and VIF values greater than 10 are indicative of multi-collinearity and pose for areas of concern (Pallant, 2013:164). The collinearity diagnostics equated to tolerance values ranging between 0.798 and 0.918 and attained an average VIF of 1.19 between the independent variables. These results are indicative of the absence of multi-collinearity concerns (Pallant, 2013:164).

To evaluate the impact the presence of advertisements on a virtual learning environment will have on students’ attitudes towards using VLEs, a paired samples t-test was conducted. There was a statistically significant decrease in students’ attitudes towards the use of a VLE without the presence of advertisements (mean=4.126, St. Dev.=1.003) and students’ attitudes towards the use of a VLE with the presence of advertisements (mean=3.977, St. Dev.=1.134) t(378)=2.486, p=0.005 (two-tailed). The mean decrease in student attitudes scores was 0.149, with a 95 percent confidence interval ranging from 0.046 to 0.251. As such, the null hypothesis H4 is rejected and H4, the alternative, is concluded.
Findings
In terms of students’ self-efficacy, technology experience and satisfaction in association with the use of a VLE, students do possess self-efficacy in terms of the use of VLEs, have positive technology experience with the use of VLEs and are satisfied with the use of VLEs. Furthermore, students indicated positive associations with regards to the ease of use of a VLE and the usefulness of a VLE. In terms of students’ use of a VLE without the presence of advertisements and the use of a VLE with the presence of advertisements, the findings indicate that students had positive attitudes to both projected VLE scenarios.

The fourth empirical objective was to investigate the relationship between self-efficacy, technology experience, satisfaction and students’ attitudes towards the use of a VLE with the presence of advertisements. When investigating the relationship between perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and attitudes towards the use of a VLE with the presence of advertisements, the relationships between all the constructs are deemed significant. As such, the more positive attitudes students have towards the use of a VLE with the presence of advertisements, the greater their perceptions towards a VLE with the presence of advertisements will be.

In addition, when evaluating the impact the presence of advertisements on a VLE had on students’ attitudes towards using VLEs, there was a statistically significant difference in students’ attitudes towards the use of a VLE without the presence of advertisements and students’ attitudes towards the use of a VLE with the presence of advertisements.

Limitations and Future Research Opportunities
Based on the findings of this study, there are a number of limitations that must be considered. When selecting the sample, a non-probability sampling method was employed. Although various demographic questions were included in the study to enhance the representativeness of the sample and minimise the effect of convenience sampling, it is advisable that caution should be exercised when attempting to generalise the findings of this study to the wider population. In addition, this study was focused on one HEI, which only employs one VLE, prohibiting any generalisations to be made regarding students across South Africa.

A cross-sectional design was utilised in the study, thus the findings stated here are an overview of a select cohort of South African students’ attitudes towards the use of a VLE with the presence of advertisements at one HEI, highlighting the need for caution to be exercised when attempting to generalise the findings of this study to the wider population. As the methods and approaches to advertising are constantly evolving, the findings of this study may become obsolete in a few years to come. The COVID-19 pandemic is reshaping the way in which teaching and learning is and will take place in the future. As such, there is an opportunity for further research to be conducted with regards to the impact of COVID-19 on higher education, HEIs and the use of VLEs in particular. Lastly, despite the study achieving a respectable response rate, the sample size is relatively small when compared to the size of the South African HEI environment.

Conclusion
In a world where digitalisation is progressively entering the HEI sector and where technological innovations are gradually forming part of the teaching and learning process, keeping students up to date with these developments is the only way to ensure that HEIs challenge students’ aptitudes in new and imaginative ways. This digital growth is creating vast opportunities for HEIs to better educate and equip students through digital platforms, such as VLEs. VLEs, being Web-based, have also been proven by this study and previous studies, to open a digital space for marketers to take advantage of, whilst generating long-term revenue for HEIs. It is now upon the management of HEIs to decide if they would like to consider this route of revenue generation and see if it will indeed be as beneficial as what the theory suggests.

To ensure that large amounts of money are not lost in the implementation of advertisements on VLEs, HEIs can apply this theory by conducting a trial run with a willing organisation or two to analyse the outcomes. Depending on the data generated, they can then decide to implement external advertising on the VLE on a larger scale. Marketers can place advertising content on these VLEs and reach their target audiences in a more focused approach, whilst HEIs can ensure equal technological advancement for the students without an increase in fees. This will help fund the clarion call of free education and, although, the financial benefit may not be as significant as that of an increase in fees, this will be a step in the right direction, which may also lead to more innovative ideas of revenue generation for HEIs. Students who enrol at HEIs and find these programmes already in place may also be more likely to accept VLEs with the presence of advertisements, whilst students who may have used the VLE prior to the integration of advertisements may be reluctant at first, however, they may become more open minded once they realise what the cost benefit is that this integration can bring.

Some digital native students in HEIs will find using technology natural and may not show resistance to the introduction of technology innovations, such as VLEs, but this is not necessarily the case for all students, especially in a country like South Africa where there is a high fraction of previously-disadvantaged students. This study has given recommendations to ensure that every student develops the required skills to remain active and included in an increasingly digital society. The development of computer labs and the programme of
loaning out laptops, will not only ensure that students keep up with the digital world, but will also produce a generation of digital native graduates who will not only appeal to the corporate market within South Africa, but internationally as well.

**References**


Questionnaire Suitability for Investigating African Generation Y Students’ Attitudes Towards Mobile Advertising

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The purpose of this study was to determine the suitability of a questionnaire for applying structural equation modelling on the data gathered concerning African Generation Y students’ attitudes towards mobile advertising. An important market segment is the African Generation Y cohort, constituting individuals born between 1986 and 2005, in South Africa, as it contributes to 29 percent of the country’s population. Owing to the significant growth that has been witnessed in mobile communication in South Africa, this communication medium has become an important advertising medium, highlighting the necessity to understand the attitudes towards mobile advertising held by this generational cohort. Based on the size and potential earning power of African Generation Y students, combined with the influential roles they play in society, there is a need for marketers to develop an understanding of what influences African Generation Y students’ attitudes towards mobile advertising. This study employed the use of a self-administered questionnaire to collect data from a convenience sample of 455 African Generation Y students across three South African public higher education institutions (HEIs) situated in the Gauteng province. The collected data was analysed using inter-item correlations, descriptive statistics and a correlation analysis. Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that African Generation Y students not only possess strong positive attitudes towards communicating using the SMS function, but towards advertising in general. In addition, African Generation Y students have positive attitudes towards the value of mobile advertising. From the findings it is evident that African Generation Y students find mobile advertisements to be intrusive, with limited entertainment value, which may contribute to a less than overall positive attitude towards mobile advertising. Furthermore, the research instrument is deemed suitable for applying structural equation modelling on the data gathered.

Keywords: mobile advertising, attitudes, reliability, validity, suitability, South Africa, African Generation Y students

Introduction
Suggett and Baker (2020) liken mobile advertising to online advertising, highlighting the increasing importance of this new medium as a means of reaching new customers. For marketers who are wanting to take advantage of the communication channels that mobile media provide, an understanding of how consumers perceive and evaluate mobile devices as a source of advertising is imperative (Haghirian & Madlberger, 2005:2; Martins et al., 2019:378). Furthermore, the shift towards the use of mobile devices as a source of advertising is a continuous process, highlighting the importance for organisations to ensure they develop cohesive marketing strategies to connect with consumers (Meyer, 2017).

Literature Review
According to Tsang et al. (2004:67), the attitudes consumers possess concerning mobile advertisements are positively associated with consumers’ intentions to receive mobile advertisements. This is believed to significantly influence consumers’ behaviour concerning how and when consumers read the mobile advertisement messages they receive. The perceived credibility, entertainment, informativeness and irritation of mobile advertisements directly influences the intentions consumers’ have concerning the purchasing of products advertised in mobile advertisements and the perceived value of the mobile advertisements received, which in turn directly influences consumers’ attitudes towards mobile advertising (Choi et al., 2008:766; Hashim et al., 2018:16).

In addition, personalisation is believed to be an antecedent that influences the attitudes of consumers towards mobile advertising (Xu, 2006-2007:9). Meyer (2017) suggests that by ensuring mobile advertisements are tailored in a way that appeals to consumers, marketers can encourage consumers to engage in research regarding specific products and services, which will most likely begin on the device upon which the mobile advertisement is received. The number of advertisements that consumers receive via mobile devices may influence the perceived value of mobile advertisements for the consumers on the receiving end (Haghirian & Dickinger, 2005). According to Ha (1996:77), consumers’ attitudes towards mobile advertising are influenced by an increase in the quantity and frequency of exposure to mobile advertisements.
Privacy concerns, covering the collection, improper access, errors and secondary use of personal information, will significantly influence consumers’ trust of and perceived risk associated with mobile advertising. This in turn assists in determining the usage behaviour intentions of mobile consumers (Zhou, 2011:536). If organisations wish to succeed with their use of mobile advertising campaigns, they need to understand what factors influence consumers’ willingness to grant permission to receive advertising messages via mobile devices. Individuals with positive perceptions of trust in mobile advertising, are more inclined to grant permission. In relation to trust, perceived control plays a significant role, in both a substitution and complementary role to trust; as such, in the context of mobile advertising, the more perceived control a consumer has, the less trust consumers require to grant permission to organisations to engage in mobile advertising. Similarly, the more control consumers perceive to have over the number and type of mobile advertisements they receive, the more inclined and willing they will be to grant permission (Jayawardhena et al., 2008:473,492; Hashim et al., 2018:16). As such, if consumers grant permission to receive mobile advertisements, it will directly influence their attitudes towards mobile advertising (Tsang et al., 2004:66,67). Abbasi et al., (2021:955) add that permission significantly directs the connection between consumers’ attitude and subsequent acceptance of mobile advertising, highlighting the significant role permission plays in consumer acceptance of mobile advertising.

**Generation Y**

In South Africa, approximately 35 percent of the population may be categorised as being part of Generation, with 84% percent of South Africa’s Generation Y cohort being classified as African Generation Y (Statistics South Africa, 2019). African Generation Y individuals who are engaged in tertiary education are viewed as an important market segment, based on the fact that higher education often translates into higher future earning potential and a higher social status within a community (Bevan-Dye & Suruijilal, 2011). For studies that focus on students at tertiary institutions, these individuals are typically defined as individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 (Steel, 2012; Wolburg & Pokrywczynski, 2001:34).

Owing to the significant developments in, and rapid adoption of, mobile technologies, mobile advertising has become increasingly popular, significantly influencing the world of marketing. As such, the success of mobile advertising is largely dependent on how receptive consumers’ are towards mobile advertising, where research suggests that the youth are more accepting of mobile advertisements in comparison to older generations. Owing to the individuals of the Generation Y cohort being deemed as the future consumer market, it is imperative that marketers develop an understanding of these consumers and their subsequent attitudes towards mobile advertising if they wish to develop appropriate mobile advertising strategies that can be used to successfully target these consumers.

**Research Design and Methodology**

A convenience sample of 455 students was obtained from three South African public higher education institutions located in the Gauteng province. In order to gather the data on the determinants of African Generation Y students’ attitudes towards mobile advertising, a structured self-administered questionnaire was employed. The proposed antecedents measured were entertainment, informativeness, credibility, personalisation, control, intrusiveness and trust. The scale items for these antecedents as well as the perceived value of mobile advertising construct were adapted from scales developed by Bracket and Carr (2001), Ducoffe (1996), Jayawardhena et al. (2009), Li et al. (2002), Merisavo et al. (2007), Pollay and Mittal (1993) and Xu (2006-2007). Scaled responses were recorded on a six-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). The gathered pilot data was analysed using SPSS, Version 22.

**Results**

Table 1 summarises the Cronbach alpha values for each of the 10 factors, which all exceeded the 0.6 level. As such, the reliability of the scale is deemed as satisfactory. According to Clark and Watson (1995:16) and Spiliotopoulou (2011), the average inter-item correlations were calculated to measure validity, whereby values within the 0.15 and 0.50 range are recommended. Although average inter-item correlation values exceeding the 0.50 level were computed for eight of the 10 factors, Pallant (2010:100) indicates that this merely indicates a strong relationship between the items.

Table 1 Reliability and average inter-item correlation values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Cronbach alpha</th>
<th>Average inter-item correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards SMSs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards advertising</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.967</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
McDaniel and Gates (1999:495) and Hair et al. (2010:235) identify descriptive statistics as an effective and efficient means used by researchers to summarise and describe the basic characteristics of large sets of data which have been gathered from a sample of participants. Measures of central tendency, shape and dispersion are some of the more commonly used descriptive statistics (Pallant, 2010:53). A six-point Likert scale, ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree, was employed in this study to measure the scaled responses. Consequently, the higher a mean value is, the stronger the agreement.

Table 2 outlines the descriptive statistics of the sample of African Generation Y students.

As evident in Table 2, none of the skewness scores fall outside of the -2 or =2 range, indicating that the data for this scale may be classified as normally distributed. With reference to the peakedness of the data distribution, the kurtosis values computed indicate a relatively flat distribution.

Attitude towards advertising (mean=4.95) and attitude towards SMSs (mean=4.40) computed the highest mean scores, indicating that African Generation Y students have a strong positive attitude towards advertising in general and towards communicating using the SMS function. Perceived informativeness (mean=3.99), value (mean=3.81), trust (mean=3.74), control (mean=3.25), credibility (mean=3.18) and personalisation (mean=3.13) of mobile advertisements all computed means above 3, suggesting that African Generation Y students possess positive attitudes towards the value of mobile advertising. Given these positive attitudes, there is evidence that African Generation Y students do find mobile advertisements to be intrusive (mean=4.00) and do not perceive mobile advertisements to have much entertainment value (mean=2.80), which may account for them not having an overall positive attitude towards mobile advertising (mean=2.88).

Advertising (Std. Dev. = 0.85) and attitude towards SMSs (Std. Dev. = 0.99) recorded the lowest standard deviations, where less dispersion in participants’ responses were indicated for African Generation Y students reported attitudes towards the use of SMSs to communicate with friends and family, and their attitudes towards advertising in general. With regards to overall attitude towards mobile advertising (Std. Dev. = 1.65) and perceived entertainment value of mobile advertising (Std. Dev. = 1.45), higher standard deviations were recorded. This suggests more dispersion in African Generation Y students’ reported overall attitudes towards receiving mobile advertisements and the perceived entertainment value of mobile advertising.

**Correlation Analysis**
According to Hair et al. (2010:710), constructing a matrix of construct correlations is useful when assessing the nomological validity of a proposed measurement model. In order to assess nomological validity, the Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficients between each pair of constructs was examined. The correlation matrix is reported on in Table 3.

**Table 3 Correlation matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attitude towards SMSs</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards advertising</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>0.159**</td>
<td>0.148**</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informativeness</td>
<td>0.185**</td>
<td>0.208**</td>
<td>0.578**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>0.212**</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>0.473**</td>
<td>0.559**</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalisation</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.395**</td>
<td>0.438**</td>
<td>0.527**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.469**</td>
<td>0.441**</td>
<td>0.439**</td>
<td>0.483**</td>
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<td>Intrusiveness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>-0.323**</td>
<td>-0.245**</td>
<td>-0.193**</td>
<td>-0.185**</td>
<td>-0.124**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>0.147**</td>
<td>0.314**</td>
<td>0.311**</td>
<td>0.301**</td>
<td>0.219**</td>
<td>0.322**</td>
<td>0.009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>0.138**</td>
<td>0.501**</td>
<td>0.595**</td>
<td>0.481**</td>
<td>0.437**</td>
<td>0.440**</td>
<td>-0.188**</td>
<td>0.378**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>0.584**</td>
<td>0.460**</td>
<td>0.481**</td>
<td>0.464**</td>
<td>0.442**</td>
<td>-0.288**</td>
<td>0.319**</td>
<td>0.558**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

From Table 3, it is evident that while the attitude-towards-SMSs construct significantly correlates with credibility, there is no significant correlation that exists with the dependent constructs of perceived value and the overall attitude towards mobile advertising. Therefore, the attitude-towards-SMSs construct will be excluded from the measurement model. This was further justified through theory, as attitude-towards-SMSs is a communication-related concept and not advertising-related. The constructs of entertainment, informativeness, personalisation, control and intrusiveness were significantly correlated with credibility, perceived value of mobile advertising and overall attitude towards mobile advertising. Credibility was significantly correlated with both perceived value and overall attitude towards mobile advertising. Attitude towards advertising was significantly correlated with perceived value of mobile advertising but not with credibility or overall attitude towards advertising.

**Limitations and Future Research Opportunities**

In this study, the focus was on measuring attitudes of African Generation Y students towards mobile advertising. As such, there were limitations emanating from this study. A non-probability convenience sampling method was employed to conduct a survey among the study’s participants, highlighting the need to take precautions when analysing the results of this study. Employing the use of a single cross-sectional research design, the findings of this research study may lack the depth of a longitudinal study. For future research, it is recommended that a longitudinal study be conducted to investigate any potential changes that would provide valuable information concerning any changes in the factors that determine African Generation Y students’ attitude towards mobile advertising.

Although the sample employed in this research study constituted African Generation Y students who were registered at three HEIs located in three different regions of one province and the stats indicated representation of individuals from all nine provinces, there is an opportunity to undertake a wider scale research study, where students registered at HEI campuses in each of the nine provinces in South Africa many be asked to participate in an attempt to develop a more accurate view of African Generation Y students’ attitudes towards mobile advertising.

Owing to this research study only using students as their target market, there is an opportunity for researchers to investigate the attitudes of the non-student portion of the South African African Generation Y cohort, in order to investigate whether a gap in the market exists to appeal to these consumers. As this study only focused on African Generation Y individuals aged between 18 and 24, there is potential to investigate younger African Generation Y members’ attitudes towards mobile advertising, as well as the attitudes held by other generations alive today.
Conclusion
The purpose of the research study was to test whether the proposed research instrument scales would be suitable for structural equation modelling. Once the data had been tested for missing data and outliers, the skewness and kurtosis statistics were converted into z-scores. The computed skewness and kurtosis z-scores were not significant, thereby indicating normally distributed data. In order to measure internal-consistency reliability, the average inter-item correlation coefficient was employed, due to all of the constructs comprising fewer than 10 items. Average inter-item correlation coefficients of above 0.50 were computed for eight of the 10 constructs, where all ten constructs recorded an average inter-item correlation of above 0.15, suggesting that the constructs exhibit acceptable internal-consistency reliability. The Pearson’s Product-Moment correlation matrix was employed to measure the nomological validity of the proposed measurement theory. The coefficients in the matrix indicate that there is significant correlation between perceived value of mobile advertising and each of the proposed antecedents. Similarly, the direction of the relationships is in accordance with the findings in the literature. Multicollinearity was measured by running collinearity diagnostics on each of the antecedents. From the results recorded it was evident that no multicollinearity exists between the predictor variables. Consequently, the research instrument is deemed suitable for applying structural equation modelling on the data gathered.

References
Developing a new code scheme for the investigation of gender roles in advertising: Male, female and LGBTQ+ portrayals

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Abstract

The paper aims to develop a new, non-binary coding instrument for the investigation of gender roles in advertising. The typology revisits existing male and female stereotypical roles, questions their value in the current advertising mediascape, and proposes new roles that capture contemporary advertising trends. The typology further introduces a comprehensive framework for the investigation of LGBTQ+ stereotypes that allows for the adoption of a more pluralistic approach in advertising research. The paper validates the coding instrument through longitudinal research of Superbowl commercials between 2010-2021. The findings suggest the persistence of traditional male and female stereotypes with only minor shifts towards more egalitarian roles and corroborate the meaningful addition of new roles in the coding scheme. The study also records a rare occurrence of LGBTQ+ portrayals but indicates a dramatic increase between 2016-2021.

Main Body/ Extended Abstract

For more than sixty years, the investigation of gender stereotypes in advertising has provided compelling evidence regarding the persistence of hierarchical patterns. During the last decade though advertisers seem to implement some strategies reflective of contemporary societal trends, such as themes of empowerment, egalitarian appeals, and increasing diversity with the proliferation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) images in mainstream media. These practices signal a shift from the long employed traditional gender clichés toward new portrayals that challenge patriarchal notions of masculinity and femininity and transcend the gender binary. However, content analytic studies that examine gender stereotypes in advertising research still rely on dated coding schemes and a binary outlook that limits their ability to provide an accurate reflection of the status quo. The purpose of the study is a) to develop a coding scheme for gender stereotype roles that enables the investigation of contemporary male, female and LGBTQ+ portrayals, and b) to validate the coding instrument by conducting a longitudinal content analysis of Superbowl ads over 12 years (2010-2021).

In order to develop a new, non-binary coding scheme, more than 3,000 advertisements circulated between 2019-2021 in mainstream media (print and tv) were scrutinized by the authors, to pinpoint contemporary gender depictions and assure that they can be accommodated within the suggested categories. For male and female stereotypes, the framework of Lysonska (1985) was used as a starting point. Contemporary portrayals for women urge the need to update existing coding roles by 1) introducing a wider range of decorative roles 2) distinguishing between sexual objectification and sexual agency 3) adding more depth to professional depictions 4) acknowledging multi-tasking portrayals 5) considering various depictions away from domestic settings and 6) challenging the predisposition towards hierarchical patterns in romantic relationships. Similarly, contemporary trends in male advertising depictions point towards the direction of 1) broadening male decorative portrayals with the introduction of the “metrosexual” stereotype 2) considering males’ engagement with traditional activities 3) adding more depth to men's professional depictions, and 4) introducing the “man as loser” stereotype. Finally, the proposed code scheme suggests 5 broad categories for the investigation of the LGBTQ+ spectrum: Gay male, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and androgynous. Nonetheless, the framework attempts to address scholar concerns regarding the partial use of sexuality as the sole dimension of analysis (Tsai 2012) and proposes subcodes including variables such as family, authority, erotization, and physical attractiveness.

In order to validate the proposed coding scheme, a content analysis of Super Bowl commercials over 12 years (2010-2021) was conducted. The final sample consisted of 602 advertisements that displayed at least one male,
female or LBGTQ+ protagonist. The unit of the analysis was “the character”, so the coding procedure was applied to 1,203 portrayals.

The findings of the research support the relevance of several new female roles such as the “bold and beautiful”, the “sexually aggressive”, and the “romantic partner”. It seems that contemporary portrayals require a broader range of decorative and sexualized roles to capture their plurality of meanings, as a preoccupation with beauty and physical attractiveness can manifest in different ways and contexts that may signal dynamism and agency (bold and beautiful, sexually aggressive) or passivity and monomania (ornamental, concerned with physical attractiveness). The depiction of males shows a predominance of traditional, popular male stereotypes like the “voice of authority”, “activities and life outside the home” and “the professional”, mirroring prior research in magazine advertising (Zotos and Lysonski 1994; Tsichla and Zotos 2016).

The study reveals that LGBTQ+ portrayals constitute 4.32% of all Superbowl portrayals over 12 years (2010-2021). Although this may appear as a small fraction compared to male and female depictions, a remarkable increase is recorded: The frequency of LGBTQ+ images observed in 2016-2021 represents a 420% increase since 2010-2015. Hence, despite the important cultural advancements regarding LGBTQ+ rights, visibility, and attitudes towards homosexuality that have occurred in the past two decades (Branchik, 2007), it seems that genderqueer depictions have only recently entered the universe of Superbowl commercials.

References


Consumer Behaviour
In-home service consumption: what do we know so far?

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The increased digitalization of consumption along with the use of virtual reality in shopping experiences was further amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, and has resulted in a transient paradigm shift (Diebner et al., 2020; Debenedetti et al., 2014; Hernandez et al. 2014; Roster, Ferrari, & Jurkat, 2016) in service consumption. Whereas traditional consumption models assume that consumers acquire services and experiences like shopping, fitness, and entertainment, out of their residential space, socially deprived and working from home consumers have increasingly demanded such services without leaving their residences (Yang et al., 2020). In this paradigm shift, an increasing portion of service offerings revolve around the concept of staying at home (Sheth, 2020; Scholz & Duffy, 2018; Roy et al., 2019); the homescape is being transformed into a servicescape, as an increasing number of services and experiences are consumed in spaces previously reserved for consumers’ private lives. This work adopts the term “in-home service consumption” to capture “the phygital service offerings (and experiences) that are consumed synchronously or asynchronously into customers’ private physical space”. Despite evidence suggesting that the in-home economy will be a growing market trend in the following years (Ipsos, 2021), little is known about in-home consumption, the nature of service exchanges at home, or the changing role of customers, service firms, and service personnel in this context.

Given the void in the literature, this study provides a first systematic effort to review and organize the literature and aims to propose a conceptual model of in-home service consumption. Using a framework-based literature reviews, we draw on the AADO framework (Actor-Antecedents-Decision-Outcomes) to synthesize our findings into an integrative conceptual framework of in-home service consumption, namely InHoServ. InHoServ provides a comprehensive understanding of the main actors involved in-home service consumption and delineates their changing role in light of technological advances and the social distance-induced behavioral shift. Finally, we provide a future research agenda highlighting four fruitful areas for researchers: theorizing in-home service consumption, the changing role of service providers, technology and service consumption at home, and the dark side of in-home consumption.

**Keywords** - in-home service experiences; domestication of technology; digital consumers; place attachment; social distance

**References**


Validating a beauty product brand loyalty scale amongst Generation Y consumers

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Abstract

Globally, the beauty product market value is expected to exceed the 558.12 billion US Dollar mark by 2026, which renders this an important and lucrative market for any economy. From a South African perspective, the beauty product market is expected to grow in value of up to 260 million US Dollars by the year 2023. Younger generational consumer segments are of particular importance to this market as these consumers are characterised as being concerned about their appearance and typically have a dynamic impact on the global retail sector. As such, the Generation Y consumer segment, consisting of individuals born between 1986 and 2005, is an important target market for marketers. It must be noted that marketers find it difficult to effectively target this ultra-connected and digitally advanced Generation Y consumer cohort, who have access to immeasurable information at a click of a button. In addition, although these consumers enjoy shopping and have sufficient time and money to spend on the act of shopping, retailers and brand managers find it challenging to retain these consumers’ loyalty, given their low tendency to engage in repeat purchasing. Consequently, a validated scale to measure consumers’ beauty product brand loyalty is necessary. As such, the purpose of this paper is to validate brand loyalty as a three-factor model within the South African context.

The data was gathered by means of a structured, self-administered questionnaire, that was distributed to a convenience sample of 610 students registered at three higher education institutions within South Africa. Once the data was collected, data analysis using Pearson’s Product-Moment correlation, confirmatory factor analysis, measures of reliability and validity and fit indices were done. The measurement model exhibited internal consistency and composite reliability, together with construct, convergent, discriminant and nomological validity. Furthermore, the model fit indices produced by AMOS provided evidence of a good fitting model with no evidence of multi-collinearity between the factors, inferring that beauty product brand loyalty is a three-factor model, including price consciousness, physical vanity and brand loyalty. This three-factor model is a reliable and valid instrument of brand loyalty in the beauty product industry context of South Africa, serving as a good starting point for marketing practitioners as well as academics in understanding Generation Y consumers’ brand loyalty tendencies in the beauty product industry.

Keywords: Beauty product, brand loyalty, Generation Y, scale validation, structural equation modelling

1. INTRODUCTION

The global beauty market was said to recover and exceed the 2019 sales levels in 2021, providing evidence that this industry is more resilient than the fashion industry, which is expected to improve by 2022 (Gerstell et al., 2020). As such, it is evident that the beauty product industry is powerful and dynamic, with a market value of 422.72 billion US Dollars in 2020 and an expected market value of 558.12 billion US Dollars by the year 2026 (ResearchAndMarkets.com, 2021). A similar finding is seen when taking a look at the African and more specifically the South African beauty product industry. Africa is responsible for three percent of the global cosmetics market value, with Nigeria and South Africa adding the most value to the African beauty product industry, contributing 3.4 billion US Dollars and 2 billion US Dollars respectively (Global Cosmetics News, 2019).

Beauty products are defined as all products used by individuals, externally, to care for and augment the beauty of one’s body (Britannica, 2022). Individuals make use of such products to cleanse and protect one’s body, as well as to enhance their appearance which in turn has an effect on their self-perception and self-esteem (Khraim, 2011; Britton, 2012). Products that form part of the beauty product industry comprise a wide variety of items such as bath oils, lotions and creams, nail polish, deodorants, lipsticks as well as facial makeup, hair-colouring products, perfumes, mouthwashes, permanent waves and any products related to skin care (Britannica, 2022). These products play a vital role in the
everyday life of individuals, as it serves as a quick and easy way to solve beauty problems and boost one’s self-esteem (Britton, 2012). This is especially true for the Generation Y individual, as they do not hesitate to spend significantly on products to assist them in looking the best they can. Furthermore, appearance is something that is of great importance to Generation Y individuals, and they use this self-image to convey messages to those around them (Denton, 2019). As a result, they are deemed as being heavy buyers of beauty products (Kulle & Hellsten, 2017). The female portion of this segment is especially important within the beauty product industry as they tend to be more spendthrift when it comes to purchasing beauty products (Beauty Packaging, 2014). Accordingly, these female consumers have proven to be the dominant gender within this industry (Pudaruth et al., 2015).

Achieving brand loyalty amongst these consumers is a challenging task given their low tendency to engage in repeat purchasing (Beauty Packaging, 2014; Ordun, 2015). South African consumers are also showing this tendency with almost 50 percent of the respondents who participated in a survey indicating that they do not necessarily deem themselves as a brand loyal individual (Bizcommunity, 2015). With Generation Y consumers not showing brand loyal tendencies, together with brand loyalty decreasing with age, marketing practitioners, retailers and brand managers need to have a thorough understanding of Generation Y consumers’ beauty product brand loyalty. To this end, validating a beauty product brand loyalty scale will serve as a starting block in measuring these consumers’ brand loyalty within the beauty product industry that will consequently provide marketers, retailers and brand managers with valuable information regarding beauty product brand loyalty.

2. LITERATURE

Generational studies are based on the premise that individuals forming part of a specific generational cohort have similar attitudes, behaviours and values based on their shared life and historical events that took place in their formative years, as well as their shared social trends (Howe & Strauss, 2007). These defining moments that influence their behaviour provide marketers, retailers and brand managers with a solid base for developing strategies that will effectively target such a group of consumers (Schewe & Meredith, 2004). When marketers develop their marketing strategies based on a specific generation they make use of generational marketing (Chaney et al., 2017). In order to engage in generational marketing a comprehensive understanding of the target generation is needed. Marketers trying to target the Generation Y cohort might find it problematic to grab the attention of these consumers, as they are known to be digitally savvy (Barton et al., 2012; Soh et al., 2017) and have access to a substantial amount of information instantaneously (Bevan-Dye & Surujal, 2011). Therefore, they do not respond to marketing initiatives as positively as previous generations (Naumovska, 2017).

Generation Y is one of the market segments defined as being distinctive and dominant, contributing a significant portion to the global population, that exceeds previous generations (Naumovska, 2017). Generation Y is a segment that enjoys shopping, and has the financial means to shop, resulting in them spending money easily (Martin & Turley, 2004:466). These consumers show specific and unique characteristics that differ from other generations. Although appearance is one of the factors that is deemed important in the everyday life of the majority of individuals (Reinten, 2014), this is even more so for the Generation Y segment, as individuals from this cohort seem to be influenced by extrinsic values such as money, recognition and their image or appearance (Main, 2017). Soh et al. (2017) concur that these individuals have an internal desire to boost their self-image and also portray this image to the world. A Commerce Department survey conducted in 1986 reinforces that the consumption of products, especially beauty products is influenced by one’s physical appearance or physical vanity, as the retail value of female beauty products surpassed 13 billion US Dollars. Therefore, a correlation between the use of beauty products and a concern with one’s appearance is evident (Netemeyer et al., 1995).

Furthermore, Generation Y consumers can be described as having particularly unique needs regarding brand preferences (Naumovska, 2017), as well as having distinctive attitudes towards brands (Ahmed & Moosavi, 2013). These consumers have been exposed to a wide variety of brands from an early age (Gözükara & Çolakoğlu, 2016), and as such are comfortable and familiar with brands (Ahmed & Moosavi, 2013). Consequently, Generation Y consumers tend to be less loyal towards brands. This is especially true with regards to high priced brands, as consumers switch to cheaper alternatives because of the increase in living costs (Yunus et al., 2018). Özkoç and Cengiz’s (2020) research confirms this by concluding that price has a significant negative impact on brand loyalty. Due to price conscious consumers focusing solely on the price of a product when shopping (Alford & Biswas, 2002; Kukar-Kinney et al., 2007), they are not oriented towards being brand loyal. Generation Y consumers exert price conscious tendencies, however, they have also proven to be fashion-forward and interested in upscale brands (Solka et al., 2011).
Because the current global market is exceptionally competitive, providing consumers with an extensive range of product alternatives, it is imperative for marketing practitioners, retailers and brand managers to inspire loyalty in consumers, as this will ensure the success of a retailer or brand (Gajanova et al., 2021). This is particularly important in an industry like the beauty product industry, as beauty product brands are constantly launching new products to stay on top of the ever-changing trends in the fashion industry. The product lifecycle of these products tends to be quite short which makes it difficult to induce loyalty for such products (Kulle & Hellsten, 2017).

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to validate beauty product brand loyalty as a three-factor model comprising price consciousness, physical vanity and brand loyalty amongst South African female Generation Y students. This sample was chosen based on numerous facts. This specific age cohort, that according to Markert (2004), includes individuals born between 1986 and 2005, represents a notable portion, 34 percent, of the total South African population (Statistics South Africa, 2021). With the future spending power, and social status of students within this cohort is superior than other cohorts (Bevan-Dye & Akpojivi, 2016). More Generation Y female members are graduating from university, resulting in more female Generation Y individuals having a tertiary education than their male counterparts (Hawkins & Motherbaugh, 2013). Therefore, Generation Y females are enjoying more financial stability and freedom than previously, having well-paid jobs, resulting in noteworthy spending power and desirable lifestyles (Newman, 2015). The global female population contributes 31.8 trillion US Dollars towards global spending, with the Generation Y segment alone contributing 170 million US Dollars to that number (GirlpowerMarketing, 2020). This significant contribution towards consumer spending is direct as well as indirect, as they influence a lot of household spending decisions (Brennan, 2015). Pudaruth et al. (2013) state that female consumers are one of the more important segments to target within the beauty product market. Wonder (2017) concurs stating that they spend an approximate 382 billion US Dollars on beauty products annually. These female consumers might base their purchasing decisions on various factors, including the brand of the product. GirlpowerMarketing (2020) agrees, by noting that 61 percent of female consumers tend to include a product on their shopping list if they are familiar with the brand. According to Burke (2021), male consumers are more brand loyal than their female counterparts, yet females exert 9 percent more loyal tendencies than men when they purchase beauty and personal care products in an online environment. As such, this research focused on answering the following question:

- Is beauty product brand loyalty amongst female Generation Y students a three dimensional structure, including price consciousness, physical vanity and brand loyalty?

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive, single cross-sectional design informed the research methodology used in this study.

4.1 Research design and sampling method

In accordance with the primary objective of this study, the target population was delineated as female Generation Y students between the ages of 18 and 24, registered at a public South African higher education institution (HEI). The original sampling frame included 26 HEIs, from which the campuses of three HEIs within the Gauteng province was selected based on judgement sampling. Furthermore, non-probability convenience sampling was utilised to draw a sample of 260 full-time female Generation Y students (per campus) from the sampling frame, calculating to an overall sample of 780 full-time female Generation Y students.

4.2 Measurement instrument and data collection

A self-reporting questionnaire was used to collect the necessary data for this study. This questionnaire encompassed a cover letter elucidating on the purpose of the study and guaranteeing the anonymity of the participants, a section gathering the demographical data of the participants and a section pertaining to the scaled-response items from previous literature. These scales gathered data pertaining to beauty product brand loyalty (three items), price consciousness (five items), and physical vanity (five items) of Generation Y female students. All of these items were adapted from existing scales by Sproles and Kendall (1986), Lichtenstein et al. (1993) and Netemeyer et al. (1995). The
beauty product brand loyalty factor comprised three observed variables, namely ‘Once I find a beauty product/brand I like, I stick with it’, ‘I have favourite beauty products/brands that I buy over and over’, and ‘I always buy the same beauty products/brands’. The price consciousness factor consisted of five observed variables, namely ‘I am willing to go to extra effort to find lower prices’, ‘I will buy beauty products at more than one store to take advantage of low prices’, ‘the money saved by finding low prices is usually worth the time and effort’, ‘I will always shop at more than one store to find low prices’, and ‘the time it takes to find low prices is usually worth the effort’. The physical vanity factor included five observed variables, namely ‘the way I look is extremely important to me’, ‘I am very concerned about my appearance’, ‘I would feel embarrassed if I was around people and did not look my best’, ‘looking my best is worth the effort’ and ‘it is important that I always look good’. The responses to these scaled items were measured by a six point Likert–type scale, that ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). The three HEI campuses that were selected to collect the necessary data were contacted to acquire the approval needed for distribution of the questionnaires. Once approval was obtained, data collection commenced by distributing the questionnaires and notifying students that participation was strictly voluntary.

4.3 Data analysis

For the purpose of data analysis, version 27 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS), was used. Methods used to analyse the data comprised Pearson’s product-moment correlation analysis, multi-collinearity analysis, reliability and validity measures, confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling (SEM).

5. RESULTS

After data collection, 610 of the 780 completed questionnaires were deemed viable, which resulted in a response rate of 78 percent. The sample was representative of the 11 official South African languages, the nine provinces and all the specified age groups. The bulk of the participants indicated their mother-tongue language as SeSotho (23.8%), their age 20 (18.7%) and their province of origin Gauteng (61.3%).

The measurement model proposed in this study was that female Generation Y students’ beauty product brand loyalty is a three-factor model comprising price consciousness, physical vanity and brand loyalty. In order to start with the validation of this model, nomological validity was assessed by means of the Pearson’s Product-Moment correlation coefficients. Subsequently, collinearity diagnostics were run on the proposed model to ascertain that there were no multi-collinearity issues. These collinearity diagnostics includes the calculation of tolerance values and average variance inflation factor (VIF) values. Table 1 reports on the correlation matrix and the collinearity diagnostics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latent factors</th>
<th>F1</th>
<th>F2</th>
<th>Tolerance</th>
<th>VIF</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand loyalty</td>
<td>F1</td>
<td></td>
<td>.768</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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*Significant at p ≤ 0.01

As presented in Table 1, the computed correlation coefficients indicate statistically significant (p ≤ 0.01) positive relationships between each of the pairs of latent factors, signifying nomological validity (Hair et al., 2010). No multi-collinearity issues are present as the tolerance values ranged between 0.743 and 0.890, which were all above the recommended level of 0.1, together with VIF values ranging between 1.124 and 1.347, which were below the recommended level of 10 (Pallant, 2016).

The measurement model specified included three latent factors namely brand loyalty (three items), price consciousness (five items) and physical vanity (five items). The first loading of each of the three latent factors were fixed at 1.0 for model identification purposes. This resulted in 91 distinct sample moments and 29 parameters to be estimated, which left 62 degrees of freedom (df) based on the over identified model.

The next step taken to assess the model was to conduct confirmatory factor analysis by means of AMOS, and to determine whether there were any problematic estimates, including any standardised factor loadings above 1.0 or below -1.0 and Heywood cases, also known as negative error variances (Hair et al., 2010). The estimates included in the table below are the standardised factor loadings, error variances, correlations, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), square-root of the AVE (√AVE) and Cronbach alpha values.

Table 1: Correlation matrix and collinearity diagnostics

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Table 2: Measurement model estimates

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<th>Latent factors</th>
<th>Standardised factor loadings</th>
<th>Error variance estimates</th>
<th>( a )</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>MSV</th>
<th>( \sqrt{AVE} )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand loyalty</td>
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<td>F1</td>
<td>.777</td>
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<td>.793</td>
<td>.792</td>
<td>.562</td>
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<td>Price consciousness</td>
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<td>F2</td>
<td>.697</td>
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<td>.912</td>
<td>.675</td>
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<td>Physical vanity</td>
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<td>F3</td>
<td>.756</td>
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<td>.597</td>
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<td>.695</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correlations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F1↔F2: 0.289</td>
<td>F1↔F3: 0.603</td>
<td>F2↔F3: 0.339</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The results in the table above indicate that there were no problematic estimates. The standardised loading estimates all exceed 0.50. This, together with the AVE values exceeding 0.50 and MSV values smaller than the correlating AVE values suggest construct, convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2010; Malhotra, 2010). With Cronbach alpha values ranging from 0.793 to 0.910 and CR values between 0.792 and 0.912, internal-consistency and composite reliability can be inferred. Furthermore, square root AVE values that exceed their respective correlation coefficients indicate discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2010). After the construct validity and reliability of the model was established, the model fit was evaluated by means of assessing the model fit indices computed through AMOS. The model-fit indices suggest a good model fit with the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) at 0.944, the Incremental Fit Index (IFI) at 0.962, the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) at 0.952, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) at 0.962, the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) at 0.0395 and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) at 0.067 (Byrne, 2016; Hair et al., 2010; Malhotra, 2010). Altogether, this proposes that beauty product brand loyalty amongst female Generation Y students is a three-factor model that displays construct validity, reliability and acceptable model fit.

6. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary objective of this study was to validate a model of beauty product brand loyalty amongst female Generation Y students. Given the importance of beauty products in the fashion industry, and the growing demand for these products, it is necessary for marketers and brand managers to have a valid model to measure and understand the factors influencing consumers’ loyalty towards beauty product brands, especially Generation Y consumers, as they represent a large and important part of the South African as well as the global economy. The results, using a South African female Generation Y student sample, validated that beauty product brand loyalty is a three-factor structure that consists of price consciousness, physical vanity and brand loyalty. The measurement model specified exhibited internal-consistency reliability and composite reliability, with no evidence of multi-collinearity between the factors. Furthermore, this model displayed construct, convergent and discriminant validity, with the goodness-of-fit indices falling within the acceptable levels, suggesting good model fit. This model provides marketing researchers and practitioners with a good starting point to an improved understanding of Generation Y consumers’ beauty product brand loyalty. Future research should be conducted to determine the effect of these factors, namely price consciousness and
physical vanity on Generation Y consumer’s brand loyalty in order to assist marketing practitioners and brand managers in integrating this knowledge into strategies used for targeting these consumers.

**REFERENCES**


Wonder. (2017). How many women buy skincare products or beauty products every year or every month or every quarter? How often do the buy beauty or skincare products, and how much do they typically spend per year on beauty or skincare products? Retrieved from https://askwonder.com/research/women-buy-skincare-products-beauty-every-year-month-quarter-often-buy-beauty-fe8qyav8v

The effect of price and vanity on Generation Y consumers’ beauty product brand loyalty

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Abstract:
The global beauty product industry is one that should be noted given its estimated total spending of 483 billion US Dollars in 2020, with an expected total spend of 716 billion US Dollars by 2025. This holds true for the South African beauty product industry as well, with an approximate value of 663.51 million US Dollar and a compound annual growth rate of 4.25 percent for the period up to 2026. Thus, it is important for marketing practitioners and retailers to comprehend the behaviour of those consumers interested in beauty products, particularly in terms of their brand loyalty, as brand loyal consumers are one of the most valuable assets for any company. Within the beauty product industry, consumers generally have brand awareness and therefore attention should be given to expand literature in this field. Younger consumers are inclined to pay more attention to brand names and spend more money on certain brands. Younger consumers include the cohort named as Generation Y, which accounts for an estimated 24 percent of the global population. Within South Africa, the Generation Y segment represents a noticeable current and future market segment, currently accounting for 34 percent of the country’s population. The females included in this generation, also known as female Generation Y consumers, have proven to be a key contributor to the demand for beauty products, with a large portion of their disposable income being spent on clothing, jewellery and beauty products. The student portion of this segment is especially important as they have the potential to receive higher income with a tertiary degree and are more likely to be trend setters. Female consumers are also deemed as individuals who are more inclined to spend time on shopping, and therefore is a more attractive target market for marketers and retailers. Consequently, this paper was directed at determining the influence of price consciousness and physical vanity on the beauty product brand loyalty of female students who form part of the Generation Y segment. For data collection purposes, distribution of a self-administered questionnaire to a sample of 610 students from three different higher education institutions within South Africa took place. The analysis done on the collected data included descriptive statistics, measures of reliability as well as validity and lastly structural equation modelling. The findings highlight that female Generation Y students’ beauty product brand loyalty tendencies are influenced by price consciousness and physical vanity within the South African context. The findings of this study will assist marketing practitioners and academics to have more knowledge of the female Generation Y segment’s brand loyalty tendencies, which can be utilised to target this market more effectively and ensure that these consumers engage in repeat purchases and that their brand loyalty is retained.

Keywords: Beauty product, brand loyalty, Generation Y, physical vanity, price consciousness

1. INTRODUCTION

The capability of a brand or retailer to attract consumers and retain them as brand loyal consumers is imperative for the success, as well as the survival of a retailer or brand (Mellens et al., 1996). One of the reasons brand loyalty receives a significant amount of attention is the fact that having consumers that are loyal to a brand reduces marketing costs, as attracting new consumers is much more expensive than retaining current consumers (Rosenberg & Czepiel, 1984). Furthermore, the willingness of brand loyal consumers to pay a premium price for the brand they know or prefer is greater than those who are not brand loyal (Mellens et al., 1996). Being familiar with a product might influence consumers to make a purchase, especially female consumers. GirlpowerMarketing (2020) confirms this by revealing that 61 percent of female consumers will add a product to their shopping list if they know the brand. This is important information for marketing practitioners, retailers and brand managers within the beauty product industry, as female consumers contribute significantly towards global spending (Valente, 2020) as well as the beauty product market, spending an approximate amount of 382 billion US Dollars annually on beauty products (Wonder, 2017) demonstrating gender dominance within the beauty product industry (Pudaruth et al., 2015). Furthermore, female consumers will most likely enjoy more attention in the years to come as their expected annual income for 2020 was forecasted at 24 million US dollars. The Generation Y segment of the female population is predicted to represent the majority of female laborers in 2030 (Valente, 2020). This might be due to the fact that there are currently more female graduates than male graduates in this generational cohort (Blumenthal & Warren, 2011). Female Generation Y consumers exhibit a notable concern for their physical appearance and show a significant interest in beauty products, applying it on a
regular basis. Owing to beauty products enhancing the physical appearance of these consumers and increasing their self-confidence which instils enjoyment, they tend to be spendthrift when shopping for beauty products (Ciccotelli, 2014; Guthrie et al., 2008). In an industry like the beauty product industry, it is difficult to retain brand loyal consumers, as products do not have a long lifecycle as a result of brands within this industry continually launching new products with the aim of remaining competitive (Kulle & Hellsten, 2017). Marketing practitioners, retailers and brand managers within the beauty product industry targeting Generation Y consumer face an even more difficult task as these consumers identify themselves as not being particularly loyal towards brands (Bizcommunity, 2015). Although there is an interest in luxury brands among Generation Y consumers (Solka et al., 2011), with living costs increasing, low brand loyalty is even more noticeable as consumers will rather switch to alternative options than being loyal to high priced brands (Yunus et al., 2018). Therefore, this paper reports on a study focused on determining the extent to which physical vanity and price consciousness influence the beauty product brand loyalty tendencies amongst female Generation Y university students.

2. LITERATURE

Generation Y consumers, defined as individuals born between the years 1986 and 2005 (Markert, 2004), are young, well-educated, prosperous and more social individuals than previous generations, exhibiting a strong interest in fashion products (Howe & Strauss, 2009). These consumers are receiving a significant amount of attention, especially in the beauty product industry (Cirisano, 2017; McCarthy, 2016), with the label of being heavy users or buyers of beauty products (Kulle & Hellsten, 2017), together with a 77 percent online penetration rate for beauty and personal care products (Scianna, 2021). They are well-informed (Bevan-Dye & Surujlal, 2011) and know what they want, making use of all types of information tools at their disposal, whether traditional or online (Geraci et al. 2004). There is a strong preference among individuals forming part of Generation Y for well-known brands (Noble et al. 2009) and these individuals tend to purchase these well-known brands to signify status or celebrate a special occasion (Collins, 2020). Furthermore, individuals from this cohort exhibit unique needs with regards to brand preferences (Naumovska, 2017), and have distinguishing attitudes towards brands (Ahmed & Moosavi, 2013). This generational cohort is influenced by extrinsic factors, such as recognition, monetary value, professional achievement, their physical appearance and the image they display to others (Durvasula & Lyonski; 2008; Main, 2017). Reiten (2014) infers that all individuals pay attention to their appearance, whether it is consciously or unconsciously, as everyone makes decisions regarding their appearance daily. Vanity is described as consumers having a concern for their appearance (Hung et al., 2011), with physical vanity being linked to one’s physical appearance (Netemeyer et al., 1995). Durvasula and Lyonski (2008) suggest that there is a probable correlation between the socio-cultural environment of an individual and the importance of and the concern with their appearance, especially according to gender. In a study done by Britton (2012), female participants indicated that their appearance is very important to them in all situations. Consequently, they tend to spend significantly on products or brands that will enhance their portrayed image or appearance.

Consumers are inclined to take price into consideration when shopping, especially Generation Y consumers, as they are well-informed, and according to Gauzente and Roy (2012) and Hansen (2013), the price of a product influences consumers with significant product category knowledge more than others. A price conscious consumer is described as an individual who shows reluctance in paying for additional or unique features of a product, if they deem the difference in price to be excessive (Monroe & Petroshius, 1981). Price consciousness is one of the emotional concepts that aids in gaining a clearer understanding of consumers’ perceptions of price in the marketplace (Matzler et al., 2006). Consumers are becoming more aware of the prices of products and services and less willing to pay premium prices as they want to maintain their current standard of living (Matzler et al., 2006). With living expenses increasing to a great extent, consumers are even more susceptible to price consciousness (Yunus et al., 2018). As such, price consciousness might influence consumers brand loyalty tendencies, as they are focussed on paying a low price and are not prone to be brand loyal. Hansae and Andervazh (2012) concur, by stating that marketing researchers and practitioners have been studying this association between price and brand loyalty for several years, concluding that a consumer’s consideration for brand is usually based on the price of that specific brand.

Brand loyalty is particularly difficult to instil in a fast-paced industry like the beauty product industry, with products moving through their life cycle at an incredible speed (Kulle & Hellsten, 2017). Furthermore, it seems that Generation Y consumers increase the difficulty for marketing practitioners, retailers and brand managers in this industry by having low brand loyal tendencies (Bizcommunity, 2015), not engaging in repeat purchases to a great extent (Beauty Packaging, 2014; Ordun, 2015). It is of utmost importance to fully comprehend the factors that might influence these consumers’ brand loyalty as they are important for the success of retailers and brands within the beauty product industry. This is evident as they contribute significantly to this industry, approximately 382 billion US Dollars on an annual basis (Wonder, 2017). This can be attributed to the Generation Y consumers deeming their appearance as important and them not being reluctant to spend a
generous amount of their income on products that will assist them in looking the best they can (Denton, 2019). This is particularly true regarding female consumers, as they do not exert miserly characteristics when purchasing beauty products (Beauty Packaging, 2014). According to Nash et al. (2006), females using beauty products are deemed as individuals with good self-confidence and good health, which in turn correlates with having more prestigious career paths and higher earning potential. As such, the female segment is deemed the more dominant gender within the beauty product industry. This might also be attributed to the media continuously reminding these female consumers of an elusive image of beauty, creating an obsession within these consumers (Britton, 2012).

Beauty products form an imperative part of the daily lives of most individuals, as everyone makes use of some sort of personal care product as part of their morning routine (Bennet et al., 2010). Beauty products are dated back to 4000 B.C. where archaeologists who studied a site in Egypt discovered artefacts that was used for facial makeup, as well as scented ointments (Britannica, 2022). Beauty products are made and sold for the purpose of taking care of and improving the attractiveness of the human body (Ergin et al., 2005), and comprise a wide variety of products, such as skin care products, antiperspirants, nail polish, perfumes, lipsticks, soap, facial makeup and washes, shampoo and conditioners, permimg aids, hair colours, skin tanning and bleaching products and toothpastes among other (Cosmetics & Skin, 2017). The beauty product industry has become a notable industry with a global value of nearly 423 billion US Dollars in 2020, and an expected value of approximately 558 billion US Dollars by 2026 (ResearchandMarkets.com, 2021). The South African beauty product market shows similar statistics with an estimated value of 3.5 billion US Dollars in 2018 projected to grow to a forecasted value of 6.16 billion US Dollars by 2024 (Statista, 2022).

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Although Generation Y individuals are deemed as heavy users or buyers of beauty products (Kulle & Hellsten, 2017), and they engage in the purchasing of well-known brands (Noble et al., 2009), this does not translate into them being brand loyal towards beauty products. This is of great concern to retailers and brands within the beauty product industry as a brand loyal consumer plays an imperative role in, not only the success of a retailer or brand, but their survival as well. This is evident as brand loyalty is one of the aspects that influences a retailer’s or brand’s sustainable competitive advantage in the market (Chan & Mansori, 2016). Accordingly, it remains important for marketing researchers and practitioners to gain a clear understanding of key stakeholders contributing to this highly lucrative market. Based on an analysis of literature, this paper theorises that female students forming part of the Generation Y segment’s beauty product brand loyalty is subjective to their price consciousness and physical vanity.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design and approach

For the purpose of achieving the set-out objectives of this study, a descriptive research design was employed, utilising a single cross sectional sampling approach by means of a self-administered survey questionnaire.

4.2 Research instrument

The self-administered questionnaire used to gather the data for this study contained a cover letter, as well as two separate sections. The cover letter provided the participants with an explanation of the purpose of the study and confirmed the anonymity of the participants, where the first section was designed to gather participants’ demographical information. The second section gathered data pertaining to the scaled items on the participants’ beauty product brand loyalty, price consciousness, and physical vanity. The following table outlines the questions included in each of these constructs and the scales from which these questions were adapted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Description of constructs and questions</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Adapted from</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand loyalty</td>
<td>Once I find a beauty</td>
<td>I have favourite beauty products/brands that I buy over and over.</td>
<td>Sproles &amp; Kendall, 1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>product/brand I like,</td>
<td>I always buy the same beauty products/brands</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>I stick with it.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Price consciousness</td>
<td>I am willing to go to</td>
<td>The money saved by finding low prices is usually worth the time and effort.</td>
<td>Lichtenstein et al. 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>extra effort to find</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lower prices.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will buy beauty</td>
<td>I will always shop at more than one store to find low prices.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>products at more than</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one store to take</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>advantage of low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prices.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The time it takes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to find low prices is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>usually worth the</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>effort.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The way I look is extremely important to me.
I am very concerned about my appearance.
Looking my best is worth the effort.
It is important that I always look good.

To record the responses of the participants, a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6) was used.

### 4.3 Target population
The target population for this study comprised 18-to 24-year-old female Generation Y students, enrolled at public South African higher education institutions (HEIs). A list including the 26 public HEIs within South Africa was used as the sampling frame. By making use of judgement sampling, the campuses of three HEIs within the Gauteng province was selected. A total sample of 780 female Generation Y students, registered as full-time students was drawn from the sampling frame by means of a non-probability convenience sampling method. This resulted in approximately 260 participants per institution. From the sample of 780 questionnaires, 610 completed questionnaires were suitable for statistical analysis. This yielded a response rate of 78 percent. A sample description is presented in Table 2.

<p>| Table 2: Description of sample |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
<th>Province of origin</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>101 (16.6)</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>19 (3.1)</td>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>18 (3)</td>
<td>Comprehensive university</td>
<td>200 (32.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>110 (18)</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>41 (6.7)</td>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>46 (7.5)</td>
<td>Traditional university</td>
<td>214 (35.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>114 (18.7)</td>
<td>IsiNdebele</td>
<td>8 (1.3)</td>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>374 (61.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>111 (18.2)</td>
<td>IsiXhosa</td>
<td>50 (8.2)</td>
<td>KwaZulu-Natal</td>
<td>15 (2.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>85 (13.9)</td>
<td>IsiZulu</td>
<td>116 (19)</td>
<td>Limpopo</td>
<td>77 (12.6)</td>
<td>University of Technology</td>
<td>196 (32.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>59 (9.7)</td>
<td>SePedi</td>
<td>71 (11.6)</td>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>35 (5.7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>30 (4.9)</td>
<td>SeSotho</td>
<td>145 (23.8)</td>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>2 (0.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SeTswana</td>
<td>73 (12)</td>
<td>North-West</td>
<td>37 (6.1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SiSwati</td>
<td>26 (4.3)</td>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>3 (0.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Venda</td>
<td>23 (3.8)</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3 (0.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tsonga</td>
<td>36 (5.9)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (0.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1 (0.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All nine provinces of the country were represented by the sample, as well as all of the languages listed as South Africa’s official languages. The sample also included participants from all of the age groups specified in the description of the target population. The majority of the participants’ province of origin is Gauteng (61.3%) and their mother-tongue language, SeSotho (23.8%). The sample included participants from all three types of institutions included in the sample frame, with slightly more participants who enrolled at a traditional university (35.1%).

### 4.4 Ethical consideration
Before the questionnaire was distributed to collect the necessary data, it was submitted to the Social and Technological Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Economic Sciences and Information Technology of the North-West University’s Vanderbijlpark campus. This committee granted ethical clearance for the collection of data as the questionnaire was categorised as a low risk.

### 4.5 Data collection
After ethical clearance was gained, gatekeepers at the selected campuses were contacted for the approval to distribute the questionnaires. After approval was obtained, field workers distributed the questionnaires and informed the participating students that their participation was strictly voluntary.
4.6 Data analysis
The data collected by the questionnaire was captured and analysed by means of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS), Version 27. The data analysis methods used encompassed frequencies and percentages, descriptive statistics, a one-sample t-test and structural path analysis. The previously validated measurement model displayed internal-consistency as well as composite reliability (CR), with Cronbach alpha and CR values above the 0.70 level. All of the standardised loading estimates and AVE values exceeded 0.50, indicating construct and convergent validity. Furthermore, with the square root of the computed AVE values for each of the three latent factors exceeding their corresponding correlation coefficients, the model exhibited discriminant validity. The validated model also displayed acceptable model fit (Dalziel, 2022). This previously validated model forms the basis of the structural model specified in the current study. The same sample of participants was used to specify the structural model.

5. RESULTS
The descriptive statistics computed to measure the extent to which female Generation Y consumers’ beauty product brand loyalty is influenced by physical vanity and price consciousness, included the means and standard deviations, as well as a one sample t-test with the expected mean set at the 3.5 level. The means, standard deviations, t-values and p-values for the three latent factors are presented in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>t-values</th>
<th>p-values</th>
<th>99% confidence interval of the difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand loyalty</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>34.239</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.3100 - 1.5239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical vanity</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>35.771</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.3719 - 1.5855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price consciousness</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>18.013</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>0.7737 - 1.0329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at p ≤ 0.01

Due to a six-point Likert scale ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ (1) to ‘strongly agree’ (6) being used for this study, means presented in Table 3 show that the female segment of the Generation Y student cohort has high brand loyalty when it comes to beauty products (mean = 4.92). Furthermore, with a mean value of 4.98 it is evident that their appearance is important to them and a mean value of 4.40 suggesting that these consumers are conscious about the price of beauty products. These computed means were all statistically significant (p ≤ 0.01). The lower and higher confidence intervals not including the value of zero, confirms the statistical significance of the mean values (Lane, 2008). Accordingly, marketing practitioners should take note of the importance of these factors when targeting the female Generation Y student cohort, particularly in the beauty product industry. In accord with the literature reviewed, a structural model was specified to test these theorised paths that physical vanity and price consciousness have a direct and positive influence on the female segment of Generation Y students’ beauty product brand loyalty. The following figure provides an illustration of the proposed structural model.
The model presented in Figure 1 is suggestive of good model fit with the standardised root mean square residual (0.04) and the root mean square error of approximation (0.06) values of below 0.08, together with the comparative fit index (0.952), the goodness-of-fit index (0.944), the incremental-fit index (0.962), and the Tucker-Lewis index (0.952) above 0.90 (Malhotra, 2010). Table 4 contains the un-standardised and standardised regression coefficients, standard error estimates and p-values estimated by AMOS for the structural model.

Table 4: Standardised regression estimates and p-values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Un-standardised β</th>
<th>Standardised β</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price consciousness → Brand loyalty</td>
<td>0.093</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical vanity → Brand loyalty</td>
<td>0.651</td>
<td>0.571</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

β: beta coefficient; SE: standardised error; p: two-tailed statistical significance

The estimates presented in Table 4 indicate that both regression paths were statistically significant and positive. The standardised regression estimates suggest that physical vanity (β = 0.571, p = 0.000 < 0.05) and price consciousness (β = 0.096, p = 0.000 < 0.05) are statistically significant predictors of female Generation Y students’ beauty product brand loyalty. Physical vanity to a greater extent than price consciousness. These factors explain 37 percent of the variance in female Generation Y students’ beauty product brand loyalty, due to the squared multiple correlation coefficient for brand loyalty being 0.372. As such, there is a possibility that female Generation Y consumers’ loyalty towards beauty product brands might be influenced by other factors as well.

6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of physical vanity and price consciousness on the beauty product brand loyalty of female Generation Y students. Marketing practitioners, retailers and brand managers might find this paper particularly valuable as insights gained from this study may assist them in understanding these consumers to a greater extent. The findings of this study indicate that physical vanity and price consciousness significantly influences female students included in the Generation Y cohort’s beauty product brand loyalty. Accordingly, marketing practitioners, retailers and brand managers should use this knowledge to their advantage by incorporating both of those elements in their marketing strategies, especially those targeted at Generation Y females in the beauty product industry, as such marketing campaigns can be used to gain the attention of these consumers and ensure brands an opportunity to build a relationship with them and ultimately retain them as brand loyal customers. Marketing campaigns aimed at these individuals could be focused on enhancing one’s physical appearance. Another aim of marketing campaigns in the beauty product industry focused on Generation Y females should emphasise the competing prices of the products advertised.
However, owing to physical vanity and price consciousness explaining 37 percent of the total variance in female Generation Y consumers’ beauty product brand loyalty, future research should be done to investigate other possible factors that might influence these consumers’ brand loyalty towards beauty products. Furthermore, Marketing Charts (2017) state that the male segment of this generational cohort is as important in the beauty product industry as their female counterparts, with a large portion of these male consumers engaging in conversations regarding beauty products. As such, future research could also include the male segment of the Generation Y cohort.

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Wonder. (2017). How many women buy skincare products or beauty products every year or every month or every quarter? How often do the buy beauty or skincare products, and how much do they typically spend per year on beauty or skincare products? Retrieved from https://askwonder.com/research/women-buy-skincare-products-beauty-every-year-month-quarter-often-buy-beauty-fe8qyav8v
Factors affecting Impulse Buying behaviour of South African youth consumers

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Abstract:
Impulse buying or impulse purchases has been a topic of interest in consumer research for the past sixty years. The phenomenon is one of the leading factors to increase sales volume in the retail market. Therefore, impulse buying is considered vital for marketers and retailers to be able to develop marketing strategies to reach their target audience more effectively. The youth are significantly more likely than preceding generations to make impulse purchases, which makes them a salient target audience to retailers. Specifically, in South Africa, the youth signify a greater number of the country’s population. The literature indicates that impulse buying behaviour is influenced by various factors. This study aimed to explore the factors affecting impulse buying behaviour of South African youth consumers. A descriptive research design approach was followed. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data from a convenience sample of 250 youth consumers. The collected data were analysed using reliability and validity analysis, descriptive statistics analysis, correlation analysis and regression analysis. The results indicated that window display, floor merchandising and promotions have a significant influence on South African youth consumers impulse buying behaviour. As such, the findings of this study provide important insights that will assist retailers and marketing managers on how to tailor marketing strategies or any other placement tactics to encourage impulse buying.

Keywords: impulse buying, influencing factors, consumers, youth, South Africa
Introduction:
Impulse buying or impulse purchases is described as a propensity of a consumer to purchase a product without planning to do so in advance (Ahmad, et al. 2019; Stern, 1962). For the past sixty years, the global phenomenon of impulse buying in the field of consumer behaviour has attracted the interest of numerous researchers (Aragoncillo & Orús, 2018; Rook, 1987 Stern, 1962). The interest lies in the extent to which it contributes to the global economy and those of individual nations (Soeltan et al., 2021), whilst impulse buying accounts between 40 and 80 percent of all purchases in the retail market, depending on the type of product (Keenan, 2021). Conversely, retailers regard impulse buying as one of the leading factors to increase sales volume in the retail market (Lyer et al., 2020).

The literature implies that for retailers to ensure a high sales volume in the retail market of a country, it is necessary to develop marketing strategies that are focused on youth consumers (Naumovska, 2017). In generational studies, the youth, also known as millennials, are described as individuals born between 1986 and 2005 (Hamilton, 2019; Markert, 2004). In 2021, the cohort, accounted for 16 percent of the global population, making them the largest cohorts across the globe (Statista, 2021). They are characterised as grasping and self-controlled (Aydogmus, 2019), and these individuals are significantly more likely than preceding generations to make impulse purchases (Cavazos-Arroya & Mányez-Guaderrama, 2022). In South Africa a country characterised as an emerging economy (McManus, 2018), retail shopping is also an important contributor of the national economy (Teuteberg, 2020). Moreover, consumer impulse buying in the retail market contributes toward the success of many South African retailers (Rootman & Krüger, 2017). In 2020, South Africa’s youth made up approximately 34 percent of the population South African population, suggesting a buying power of close to 24 million individuals (Statistics South Africa, 2020). Consequently, these individuals demonstrate noteworthy consuming potential and purchasing power (Ladhari et al., 2019). Therefore, the youth is a salient target audience to South African retailers (Broll, 2019).

Retailers and marketers retail’ ability to attract and retain youth consumers successfully is largely dependent on their ability to understand this target audience impulse buying behaviour and the factors that influence that behaviour (Rodrigues et al., 2021). Evidence from the literature suggests that consumers impulse buying behaviour is influenced by several factors such as, window display (Francis & Bhatia, 2021; Vishnu & Raheem, 2013), floor merchandising (Sindhu & Kloep, 2020; Ahmed & Riaz, 2018) and promotions (Rodrigues et al., 2021; Kempa et al., 2020). Window display is seen as a fundamental part of the store design as it is the initial introduction point the consumer experience with the product or brand (Radha, 2018; Soomro et al., 2017). According to Togar & Reza, (2019) window display also provides the consumer with a rapid impression of the store. Eby, (2017) state that physical attractiveness of the store impresses customers highly for store selection above near direct competition. Floor merchandising pertains to the arrangement of the store sections and aisles and ensure that consumers are expose to all products and brands the store has to offer in the given floor space available (Nguyen et al., 2022). Ahmed & Riaz, (2018) believe that good floor merchandising contributes to a more pleasant, entertaining, and enjoyable shopping experience as it reduces consumers perceived stress while shopping. Additionally, Cuong, (2019) argue that well-planned floor merchandising will assure consumer products and brands that are visible, easily accessible, and eye-catching. Promotions are marketing strategies where businesses use a variety of incentive tools, mostly short-term to trigger and create a demand for a product or brand (Effiong et al., 2018). These tools include incentives namely, reduced prices, competition, coupons, etc. (Naidoo & Mathivha, 2021). Furthermore, promotion is seen as a competitive defence by providing an extra incentive to a business target audience to purchase from them rather than competitors (Yasa et al., 2020). In addition, researchers (Anas et al., 2022; Rodrigues et al., 2021) found that consumers fear the future, therefore providing products at promotional prices encourage consumers to make more impulse purchases.

Therefore, through better understanding youth consumers impulse buying behaviour from an emerging economy makes an important contribution in that it will aid retailers and marketers gauging marketing strategies to reach their target audience more effectively. Ultimately, contributing to the national economy.

Research Methodology
This study aimed to determine the factors affecting South African youth consumers impulse buying behaviour. A descriptive research design and a single cross-sectional approach were followed for this study.

Sampling Method
Youth consumers, aged from 18 – 35 years, formed the target population of this study. Registered students at a South African Higher Education Institution (HEI) were included. The sampling frame consisted of one campus located in the Gauteng province of South Africa. A non-probability convenience sample of 250 students was included in the main study, where a quantitative research approach was followed.
Research instrument and data collection
The data for this study was collected by using a self-administered survey questionnaire that consisted of two sections. The first section requested participants demographic information and the second section determined the factors affecting impulse buying behaviour amongst South African youth consumers. The second section comprised fifteen items adapted from the study of Kacen & Lee (2002), pertaining to consumer impulse buying behaviour. All scaled responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 1=disagree to 5=agree, based on the participants’ agreement or disagreement to the statements relating to the factors affecting their impulse buying behaviour. Before the data gathering process commenced, the questionnaire was piloted on a convenience sample of 30 youth consumers that did not form part of the main sample. This was done to establish reliability, and the results did not form part of the primary sample. Hereafter, the necessary permission from the HEI lecturers was obtained before the questionnaires were distributed to students.

Sample description
From the total number of 250 questionnaires that were distributed, 201 questionnaires were completed and usable for inclusion in data analysis, resulting in a 80 percent response rate. As indicated in Table 1, both female participants (66.2%) and male participants (33.8%) were represented in the sample. The study comprised fewer students that are enrolled part time (12.0%) than full time enrolled (88.0%) students. Most of the participants indicated being between 20 and 25 years (54.8%) of age, followed by those being younger than 20 years (30.2%) and older than 25 years (9.5%). A greater number of the sample comprised of second year (30.4%) students, followed by first year (27.4%), postgraduate (18.4%), third year (12.9%) and fourth year (10.9) students.

Table 1: Demographic profile of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>33.8%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;30</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment status</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part time</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of Study</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-graduate</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ own compilation

Data analysis
After the completed questionnaires were coded, it was captured in Microsoft Excel, thereafter, the captured data was processed and analysed with Version 25 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) for Windows. For this study, the statistical analysis of the gathered data included reliability and validity analysis, descriptive analysis, correlation analysis and regression analysis.

Reliability & Validity
A Cronbach alpha value of 0.751 was calculated for the entire scale determining the factors affecting impulse buying behaviour of South African youth consumers. The computed Cronbach’s Alpha is above the recommended level of 0.70 (Pallant, 2016; Brace et al., 2012). An average inter-item correlation of 0.50 was calculated. The value was in the suggested range of 0.15 to 0.50 for reliability, therefore demonstrating further reliability (Clark & Watson, 1995) and signifying convergent and discriminant validity of the scale determining the factors affecting impulsive buying behaviour.

- Descriptive analysis
After the reliability and validity of the scale had been verified, the descriptive statistics were computed. Table 2 describes the means and standard deviations denoting to factors affecting youth consumers impulsive buying behaviour.
Table 2: Descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Window display</td>
<td>3.487</td>
<td>0.922</td>
<td>-0.300</td>
<td>-0.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor merchandising</td>
<td>3.029</td>
<td>0.799</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotions</td>
<td>3.692</td>
<td>0.866</td>
<td>-0.518</td>
<td>-0.154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ own compilation

As presented in Table 2, means above 3 were calculated for all three factors in the impulse buying behaviour scale. The highest mean was recorded on promotion (mean=3.692), followed by window display (mean=3.487). The lowest mean was recorded for floor merchandising (mean=3.029). The results suggest that South African youth consumers feel if they see an interesting offer on store-signs they tend to buy it. They also believe that clearance signs entice them to look through products.

- Correlation analysis

A correlation matrix of Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficients was computed to assess the relationship between the three affecting factors and impulse buying behaviour. Table 3 reported on the correlation matrix.

Table 3: Correlation matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impulse buying behaviour</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.416**</td>
<td>0.409**</td>
<td>0.405**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window display</td>
<td>0.416**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.524**</td>
<td>0.479**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor merchandising</td>
<td>0.409**</td>
<td>0.524**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.336**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotions</td>
<td>0.405**</td>
<td>0.479**</td>
<td>0.336**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Authors’ own compilation

As outlined in Table 3, statistically positive relationships were found between all three factors which suggests nomological validity. The strongest association was between window display and floor merchandising (r=0.524, p<0.01). Whilst, still statistically significant, the weakest relationships were recorded between promotions and floor merchandising (r=0.336, p<0.01).

- Regression analysis

A regression analysis was conducted to determine the influence of window display, floor merchandising and promotions on South African youth consumers’ impulse buying behaviour. A summary of the regression model and ANOVA results are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of regression model and ANOVA results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>0.516</td>
<td>0.266</td>
<td>0.254</td>
<td>23.176</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ own compilation

As depicted in Table 4, a significant R-ratio (p ≤ 0.05) suggests that the regression model predicts the influence of the perceived factors on impulse buying behaviour. The R² value indicates that 23 percent of the variance in youth consumers perceived affecting factors on impulse buying behaviour is explained by the three independent factors. Following this, the contribution of each of the independent factors affecting youth consumers’ impulse buying behaviour was calculated, as reported on in Table 5.

Table 5: Contribution of independent factors affecting youth consumers’ impulse buying behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Standardised Beta</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Significance-level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Window display</td>
<td>0.175</td>
<td>2.214</td>
<td>0.028*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor merchandising</td>
<td>0.236</td>
<td>3.236</td>
<td>0.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotions</td>
<td>0.238</td>
<td>3.335</td>
<td>0.001*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)

Source: Authors’ own compilation
The results reported in Table 5 suggest that at the p ≤ 0.05 level, window display (β=0.175, p=0.000<0.05), floor merchandising (β=0.236, p=0.000<0.05) and promotions (β=0.238, p=0.000<0.05) have a statistically significant positive influence on youth consumers impulse buying behaviour.

Discussion
The study gauged youth consumers impulse buying behaviour in the South African context. The results provide important insights into the factors affecting impulse buying behaviour. Statistical means in the area of interest of the five-point Likert scale were confirmed on all factors. The highest mean was recorded on promotion, suggesting that South African youth consumers tend to buy when they see an interesting offer on store-signs and believe that clearance signs entice them to look through products. This is in line with the findings of a study conducted by Effiong et al., (2018) who found that consumers are switching behaviour between two or more products to take advantage of promotions. Furthermore, the correlation matrix results indicate that there was a strong connection between window display and floor merchandising. This is similar to the findings of Radha, (2018) who found that store image or store impression have a strong relationship with store layout. In addition, regression analysis was performed to determine the affect of window display, floor merchandising and promotions on South African youth consumers impulse buying behaviour. The results show that window display, floor merchandising and promotions have significantly positive affects on youth consumers. These results are consisted with that of a study performed by Adam, (2020) who concluded that consumers impulse buying behaviour is influenced by window display, floor merchandising and promotional signage.

Conclusion
Impulse buying is a global phenomenon that received considerable interest in the research field of consumer behaviour. The phenomenon is interesting since it is one of the leading factors to increase sales volume in the retail market and in response contributes to the economic prosperity of a country. Furthermore, youth consumers tend to make more impulse purchases than previous generations. Understanding youth consumers impulse buying behaviour in the South African context, will aid researchers and marketers in determining effective marketing strategies to reach the South African youth consumers more effectively.

It is recommended that retailers strive to create window displays that engage with consumers, ensuring that consumers stop, look back and enter a store. Consequently, having a well-designed window display which informs customers, that retailers have quality and interesting products in store. In addition, it is suggested that retailers position their shelves in such a way that it attracts consumers to buy the product or brand without the need to look through a section. Furthermore, youth consumers are of the opinion that if they see an interesting offer on store-signs they tend to buy it. As such, it is proposed that retailers organise retail displays (new seasonal displays, special offers, etc.) in such a manner to draw attention which will encourage customers to make an impulse purchase at checkout.

Possibilities for future research include the investigation of impulse buying behaviour across more provinces in South Africa, or a comparative study between South Africa and other (emerging or developed) countries, or a comparison between male and female youth consumers.

References:


Customer Satisfaction of Users of Indian Post Offices: A Case Study of North-Western India

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Abstract

Initial Feild Screening, Pilot Survey and Main Survey has been done from North western region of India, namely Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh Circle of India Post. Given the analysis of responses from 816 respondents across North Western India (204 HP, 360 PB, 252 HR), we observe that the failure handling as established by literature have most impactfull effect on Brand Value, Loyalty and related factors, rather than that of perception and satisfaction, i.e. Having negative effect. Brand Value is observed directly affected by ITES Perception, E-Service Satisfaction, Salesman Qualities, Loyalty and Related Factors. Whereas, ITES Perception and E-Service Satisfaction negatively leads to Brand value by (19.6) % and (.061) % respectively. On the other hand, Salesman Qualities, Loyalty and Related Factors leads to Brand Value by 14.2 %, 69.3 % and 38.9 % respectively. Loyalty is affected by Salesman Qualities, Failure Handling and Related Factors, with Salesman Qualities, Failure Handling and Related Factors leading to Loyalty by 15.4 %, 39.6 % and 43.1 % respectively. Failure Handling leads to Related Factors by 77.2 %, whereas, Related Factors leads to ITES Perception by 59.7 %. ITES Perception and Failure Handling leads to E-Service Satisfaction by 30.3 % and 69.3 %. Hence given the above findings, failure handling is a major factor to be looked upon and taken care for in the modern age e-era. Additionally, Loyalty is found to be a major factor in formation of brand value, that is again majorly held with the failure handling and related factors. There upon, same should be highly taken care of for future business prospects.

Keywords: Customer Satisfaction, Users Of Indian Post Offices, North-Western India.
Price promotion or non-price promotion? A comparative study on Generation Y consumer purchasing behaviour concerning low-involvement products

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Abstract:
The competition among retailers, including retailers in the fast-moving consumer goods industry, has become more intense over recent years due to changing retail dynamics, including changes in consumers’ shopping behaviours. As a result, these retailers are faced with the challenge to alter their marketing strategies in order to remain competitive and stimulate demand for their products. Sales promotions are an important part of the marketing communication mix used to stimulate demand, especially in the fast-moving consumer goods industry. However, in order to encourage the desired purchasing behaviour among consumers, marketers need to use the most appropriate sales promotions, which, in turn, requires a clear understanding of the specific market segment’s preferences. The purpose of the study is to determine whether there are any differences in African Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards price and non-price promotions in relation to specific purchasing behaviours, namely brand switching, purchase acceleration, stockpiling and product trial concerning low-involvement products. A quantitative research approach was followed, whereby the required data was gathered using a structured self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was completed by a convenience sample of 543 African Generation Y students registered at two South African public higher education institutions that are located in the Gauteng Province. The statistical analysis that was performed on the collected data included reliability and validity analysis, descriptive statistics, a paired-sample t-test and Cohen’s d. The findings indicate that African Generation Y consumers have positive attitudes towards price- and non-price promotions, and that these promotions could induce certain purchasing behaviours regarding low-involvement products. In addition, the findings revealed that non-price promotions are more likely to influence African Generation Y consumers’ purchasing behaviours concerning low-involvement products than price promotions.

Keywords: Price promotion, non-price promotion, purchasing behaviour, low-involvement products, Generation Y

INTRODUCTION

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry, also known as the consumer-packaged goods (CPG) or low-involvement products (LIP) industry (Davis, 2017), comprises manufacturers and retailers that specialise in non-durable household goods such as packaged foods, beverages, cleaning products, toiletries, cosmetics and over-the-counter medication (Ford, 2021). This industry is among the main contributors to the South African and global economy (Jacobs & Mafini, 2019). The global FMCG industry is estimated to reach a value of 15 361.8 billion dollars by 2025 (Businesswire, 2019), partly because of the growing population and associated increase in consumption (Businesswire, 2019; Stats SA, 2021). Furthermore, the increase in shopping malls over the years has ensured easier access to stores, which also contributes to the increase in consumption (Businesswire, 2019). In South Africa, the general dealers, including non-specialised stores that sell food, beverages and tobacco, were the largest contributor to the retail trade sales in January 2022, while the ‘food, beverages and tobacco products in specialised stores’ category experienced the highest year-on-year growth for January 2022 (Stats SA, 2022). The FMCG industry internationally has undergone various changes over the last few years, of which one of the major causes of change was the global Covid 19 pandemic that forced consumers to change their shopping behaviours. Owing to the lockdown restrictions, economic pressures, store closures and changing priorities (Charm et al., 2020), consumers shopped less frequently, increased the size of their shopping basket, especially for essential products (Ho, 2021; NielsenIQ, 2021) and increased their online shopping for essential product categories (Charm et al., 2020). Furthermore, consumers globally and in South Africa have become price sensitive and cautious about their spending and as a result, seek promotional deals (Ho, 2021; Nanji, 2018; NielsenIQ, 2021) especially for groceries (Raak, 2021) and demand value for money (Charm et al., 2020; Le Roux, 2020). It is predicted that consumers’ use of promotions will remain popular in the future.
(Berkey, 2021; Beyea, 2022). The pressure exerted by consumers for lower priced products, coupled with the already intense competition among retailers and manufacturers in the FMCG industry, often result in intense price competition among these businesses. In turn, this results in an increased use of a range of promotions by manufacturers and retailers to increase sales and store traffic (Heilman et al., 2011). However, when faced with limited budgets, various FMCG retailers have to carefully consider their marketing budgets (Abeywardena, 2020; Lee, 2017) and often make more use of sales promotions (Kotler & Keller, 2012). To maximise the effectiveness of the sales promotions, Aquino et al. (2019) emphasise the importance of selecting sales promotion techniques that will be most suited for the specific target market, which requires a thorough understanding of the target market characteristics, their attitudes and preferences.

Generation Y, also referred to as Millennials, is the largest consumer segment globally (Roland Berger, 2019), which comprises individuals born between the year 1986 and 2005 (Markert, 2004). In South Africa, these individuals make up 34 percent of the total South African population, which is approximately 20.6 million individuals. Of these, 84 percent are African (part of the black ethnic group), which equals to 29 percent of the entire South African population (Stats SA, 2021). This generation is the first to grow up in the technological and internet era and is the best educated generation in terms of post-school education (Adams, 2022). Generation Y individuals are characterised as confident (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019) and highly influential (Fallon, 2021). They are perceived as the upcoming generation of big spenders (Bizcommunity, 2020), but are often unresponsive to the overwhelming number of marketing communications that they receive and appreciate personally relevant promotions (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). In a study conducted by Inmar Intelligence, it was reported that the Generation Y consumer segment made more use of rebates than any other generation (Ketner, 2019). Similarly, Kats (2019) reported that Generation Y consumers are influenced by discounts and coupons. The Generation Y cohort is currently divided into two groups, namely the working class and the student segment (Roland Berger, 2019). The student segment is an attractive target market sought by marketers, due to their future earnings and spending potential (Bevan-Dye, 2015). In addition, the Generation Y student population is entering the phase where they are becoming independent, and are starting to make their own decisions and form their own shopping habits without the influence of their families (Thomson, 2011). Therefore, it is important to gain an understanding of their shopping behaviours and to determine their attitudes towards sales promotions to adapt marketing strategies and promotion campaigns aimed at these individuals. By determining their attitudes towards sales promotions and preferences during this phase, marketers would be better equipped to market to these individuals when they become employed and have more disposable income.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sales promotions play an essential role in businesses’ marketing programmes (Ali et al., 2017). Although it has been used by businesses for decades, it is still considered one of the most effective tools to influence consumer decision-making (Aquino et al., 2019; Neha & Manoj, 2013). Sales promotions are short-term incentives used to influence consumers or businesses’ product or service purchases (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021). These incentives are used to achieve specific objectives such as to increase market share or to introduce a new product, and are usually implemented for a limited time period (Nijo & Kemthose, 2019). As such, sales promotions draw consumers or businesses’ attention to a product, while the value of the incentive invites the consumers or businesses to engage in a transaction immediately (Kotler & Keller, 2012). This creates excitement, increases short-term customer purchases and engagement, or improves long-term relationships with customers. Sales promotions can be targeted at the end consumer, which involves using consumer sales promotions, or retailers and wholesalers, where trade sales promotions are used (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021). When sales promotions are directed at the end consumer, the objective is usually to influence the quantity, timing or choice of a consumer’s purchases (Keller, 2013). According to Lee (2002), sales promotions can be categorised as price promotions or non-price promotions.

Price promotions, also referred to as monetary-based promotions, are implemented by businesses with the aim to increase sales over a short term (Carpenter & Moore, 2008). While this type of promotion is effective in increasing short-term sales, it is often criticised for influencing quality perceptions, brand associations and the reference price of products or services (Buil et al., 2013). According to Huang et al. (2014), price promotions are associated with the economic benefit of purchasing a product or service at a reduced price or purchasing an increased quantity of a product for the same price. As such, price promotions mainly include techniques such as coupons, discounts, bonus packs and rebates (Carpenter & Moore, 2008; Gedenk et al., 2009; Mendez et al., 2015; Nasir & Bal, 2016). Coupons are certificates that consumers submit to save money when purchasing the specified product (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021). Price discounts refer to when a promoted product or service is offered at a lower price than the normal price (Adetayo et al., 2020). Bonus packs or price packs refer to products that are packaged together and then offered at a reduced price, such as two for the price of one or buy
one get one free deals (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021; Smith, 2021). Rebates, also known as cash refunds, provide consumers with a price reduction after the promotional product is purchased, whereby consumers send the proof of purchase to the manufacturer, who then provides the refund to the consumer (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

Non-price promotions, also known as non-monetary-based promotions, are used by businesses to establish long-term benefits such as strengthening brand associations (Gedenk et al., 2009; Jones, 2019; Lee, 2002), enhancing quality perceptions (Buil et al., 2013) and increasing market share (Grewal et al., 2011), rather than to increase short-term sales (Nbudisi & Moi, 2005). This type of promotion aims to provide a benefit other than a monetary benefit to consumers (Sinha & Verma, 2017) and includes incentives such as free gift premiums and samples, sweepstakes and contests (Gedenk et al., 2009; Jones, 2019; Nasir & Bal, 2016). A sample involves offering a small amount of a product to consumers at no or minimal cost (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021). This incentive is particularly useful to encourage product trial or increase awareness (Nijo & Kemthose, 2019). Free gifts, on the other hand, involve offering a gift to consumers at no cost, even though the gift has monetary value (Nasir & Bal, 2016). Contests and sweepstakes are similar in that they provide consumers with an opportunity to win something; however, contests require the consumer to submit an entry, while sweepstakes require consumers to submit their names into a draw (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021). Regardless of the specific type of sales promotion, ultimately, sales promotions are used by businesses to influence a range of consumer purchase behaviours (Kotler & Keller, 2012; Lappeman et al., 2021). However, the effect of sales promotions on consumers’ purchasing behaviours is dependent on the product or service that is promoted and the target market.

Purchasing behaviour refers to how consumers select, acquire and consume products or services to satisfy their needs and wants (Kler et al., 2022). Consumers’ purchase behaviour is central to a marketer’s efforts, and therefore, a vast amount of research has been done in an attempt to understand consumers’ purchasing behaviours and the influence of marketing, including sales promotions, on this behaviour (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021). Sales promotions have the potential to entice a range of behaviours, namely purchase acceleration, stockpiling, brand switching and product trial (Gilbert & Jackaria, 2002). When businesses have the objective to increase their market share to ultimately increase sales, they might aim to encourage brand switching or product trial among potential consumers. Brand switching involves persuading consumers to purchase a product, brand or service that they do not generally purchase, while product trial involves convincing consumers to purchase a product, brand or service that they have not purchased before (Mittal & Sethi, 2011; Nasir & Bal, 2016). If a business seeks to increase sales among existing customers, the aim might be to encourage purchase acceleration by convincing consumers to make purchases earlier than planned or stockpiling, where consumers are convinced to purchase larger quantities of a product than needed at the time (Keller, 2013). Previous research has found that both price promotions such as discounts and coupons, and non-price promotions such as free samples and premiums, among others, are effective in influencing consumers’ decision-making (Aquino et al., 2019; Genchev & Todorova, 2019), purchase intention (Qazi et al., 2021) and specific behaviours such as product trial, purchase acceleration, stockpiling and brand switching (Mittal & Sethi, 2011; Nasir & Bal, 2016).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study was to determine whether there are any differences in African Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards price and non-price promotions in relation to specific purchasing behaviours, namely brand switching, purchase acceleration, stockpiling and product trials concerning LIPs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design and sampling method

A descriptive research design with a single cross-sectional approach was followed for this study. The target population of this study was African Generation Y students between 18 and 24 years of age. In addition, these students had to be registered full-time for an undergraduate qualification at a South African public higher education institution (HEI). From the sampling frame of 26 South African public HEIs, two HEIs were selected to partake in the study using the non-probability judgement sampling method. These HEIs were located in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. After the required permission from the participating HEIs was solicited, a non-probability convenience sample of 600 participants, 300 per institution, was selected from the two participating HEIs.
Measurement instrument and data collection

The data was collected from the participants by means of a self-administered questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire included a cover letter that outlined the purpose of the study and informed the participants that their anonymity is guaranteed. Following the cover letter was Section A of the questionnaire, which included questions that requested the participants’ demographic information, while Section B included a scale that measured the participants’ attitudes towards price and non-price promotions regarding LIPs. The scale used in Section B was adapted from the measuring scale developed by Gilbert and Jackaria (2002), which included statements that measure the effect of price and non-price promotions on specific purchasing behaviours, namely product trial, purchase acceleration, stockpiling and brand switching. The participants responded to these statements using a six-point Likert-type scale that ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). Once the required permission for the distribution of the questionnaires at the two HEI campuses was granted, the participants were approached at the participating campuses using the mall intercept approach. The participants were invited to participate in the study and those who agreed to participate were informed that participation was strictly voluntary and that they were free to withdraw for the study at any time.

Data analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 27.0 was used to analyse that data. The statistical methods used for the data analyses included frequencies, reliability and validity analysis, paired sample t-test, Cohen’s d and descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

From the total sample of 600 participants, 543 questionnaires were completed in full and met the requirements in terms of age and ethnicity, and therefore were deemed usable. The majority of the participants were from the university of technology (54.9%), and the largest portion of the students were 20 years of age (25.2%), followed by those who were 19 years of age (21.4). The sample was spread relatively evenly between the first-, second- and third-year students. Furthermore, the sample included more female participants (62%) than males (38%). Table 1 presents a detailed description of the sample.

Table 1: Sample description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
<th>Year of study</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional university</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1st year</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of technology</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>3rd year</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21 years</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>4th year</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22 years</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>5th year</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23 years</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24 years</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To determine the internal consistency reliability of the entire scale, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated and returned a value of 0.85. The Cronbach alpha value surpasses the recommended value of 0.7 (Pallant, 2020), which suggests internal consistency reliability. In addition, to assess the construct validity of the scale, the average inter-item correlation was calculated and retuned a value of 0.258, which fell within the 0.15 to 0.5 range (Clark & Watson, 1995), and therefore, provides evidence of construct validity.

A paired sample t-test was performed to determine whether there are any differences in African Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards price and non-price promotions in relation to the four specific purchasing behaviours. To determine the practical significance of the findings, Cohen’s d was calculated for each pair, where a value of 0.2 indicates a small effect, 0.5 a medium effect and 0.8 a large effect (Pallant, 2020). The significance level was set at a 5 percent level. The standard error, t-statistics, p-values and Cohen’s d values are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Paired sample t-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consumer purchasing behaviours</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>t-statistics</th>
<th>p-values</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1: Brand switching</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>6.344</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td>0.309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 2: Purchase acceleration</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>8.961</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td>0.369</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Manufacturers and retailers within the FMCG industry are experiencing intense competition. In addition, the changes in consumers’ shopping behaviour, such as the increase in online shopping and increased sensitivity to prices, put additional pressure on FMCG retailers and manufactures. In an attempt to remain competitive and increase their market share, manufacturers and retailers often use sales promotions to convince consumers to purchase their products. However, to ensure the effectiveness of a promotion campaign, manufacturers and retailers need to have a clear understanding of their target market and know which sales promotions would yield the highest results. As such, this study sought to determine whether there are differences in African Generation Y consumers’ preference for non-price promotions in this study could be attributed to the product category that was included in the study. This study focused on LIPs, which include non-durable products that are consumed regularly and have a relatively low price. As such, it could be possible that African Generation Y consumers are less sensitive to the prices of LIPs, and therefore find non-price promotions more attractive. This could explain why non-price promotions such as free samples are effective in convincing consumers to try a new product or to make unplanned purchases. As the benefits of non-price promotions such as free samples and premiums are immediate, it is likely that African Generation Y consumers are more attracted to these promotions. The findings of this study are consistent with those of Genchev and Todorova (2019), who found that African Generation Y consumers are more likely to switch brands, accelerate their purchases, stockpile or try out new products when a non-price promotion, such as a free sample or premium, is offered rather than a price promotion. African Generation Y consumers are more likely to switch brands, accelerate their purchases, stockpile or try out new products when a non-price promotion, such as a free sample or premium, is offered rather than a price promotion.

As shown in Table 2, statistically significant differences (p = 0.000 < 0.05) were found between Pair 1 (price- and non-price promotions in relation to brand switching), Pair 2 (price- and non-price promotions in relation to purchase acceleration), Pair 3 (price- and non-price promotions in relation to stockpiling) and Pair 4 (price- and non-price promotions in relation to product trial). To determine the practical significance of these differences in attitudes towards price- and non-price promotions, Cohen’s d was calculated for all four pairs. For Pair 1 (d=0.309>0.2), Pair 2 (d=0.369>0.2) and Pair 4 (d=0.396>0.2), the effect size is small, moving towards a medium effect, while the effect size for Pair 3 (d=0.212) is small (Pallant, 2020). Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics, namely the means and standard deviations (SD) concerning the extent to which price- and non-price promotions induce African Generation Y consumers’ purchasing behaviours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consumer purchasing behaviours</th>
<th>Price promotion Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Non-price promotion Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1: Brand switching</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 2: Purchase acceleration</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 3: Stockpiling</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 4: Product trial</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As evident in Table 3, higher mean values were recorded for non-price promotions in relation to brand switching (mean = 4.60), purchase acceleration (mean = 4.42), stockpiling (mean = 4.51) and product trial (mean = 3.83). This suggests that African Generation Y consumers have more favourable attitudes towards non-price promotions and are more likely to switch brands, accelerate their purchases, stockpile or try out a new product when a non-price promotion, such as a free sample or premium, is offered rather than a price promotion. The findings of this study are inconsistent with the findings reported by Köksal and Spahiu (2014), who conducted a study in Albania, Nasir and Bal (2016), who conducted a study in Turkey, and Karthik and Sudheer (2014), who conducted a study in India, and all found that consumers are more attracted to price promotions such as price-offs, where the benefit is realised immediately. Similarly, Aquino et al. (2019), who conducted a study on students in the Philippines, found that even though non-price promotions such as free samples are effective in convincing consumer to try a new product or to make unplanned purchases, price promotion had a stronger impact. Contradicting these findings, Qazi et al. (2021) found that both price discount (price promotions) and premium (non-price promotions) were the most effective sales promotions in influencing consumers’ purchase intentions for FMCG in Pakistan. In addition, the findings of the study reported on in this paper are in line with those of Genchev and Todorova (2019), who found non-price promotions, particularly samples, to be the most effective tool to influence consumers’ purchase behaviour regarding non-durable goods.
Y consumers’ attitudes towards price and non-price promotions in relation to four LIP purchasing behaviours. The required data was collected by means of a self-administered questionnaire that was distributed to a convenience sample of 600 African Generation Y students between 18 and 24 years of age who were registered full-time at two HEIs in Gauteng, South Africa. The results of the paired sample t-test revealed that there were statistically significant differences between African Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards price and non-price promotions regarding brand switching, purchase acceleration, stockpiling and product trials concerning LIPs. The mean differences indicated that African Generation Y consumers had a more favourable attitude towards non-price promotions regarding all four LIP purchasing behaviours.

Based on the findings of this study, retailers and manufacturers could make use of non-price promotions to encourage LIP purchases among African Generation Y consumers. This will assist with achieving long-term objectives, such as creating brand knowledge and enhancing quality perceptions regarding the brand, since the focus of non-price promotions is on the brand rather than the price as with price promotions (Mendez et al., 2015). Given that consumers are more involved in online shopping than before, LIP manufacturers and retailers should ensure that the non-price promotions that they employ are linked with content on their websites and other online platforms to increase the awareness of the promotion, engagement with customers and, in turn, the effectiveness of the promotion. It is also important to ensure that the non-price promotion offers value to the consumers and that the value is easily identified by the consumer. For example, by advertising the financial value of a sample or premium, the promotion might be more attractive to the price-sensitive consumers. To maximise the effectiveness of the promotion, manufacturers and retailers should consider the timing of promotion. This is because consumers tend to go to the stores less frequently, and therefore the promotion should be implemented at a time that consumers would be more likely to shop, such as month-end.

Caution should be taken when generalising the findings, given that the non-probability sampling method was employed in this study. Future research is required to understand the motivations for these attitudes and to gain insights into the factors that influence these attitudes.

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Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards price and non-price promotions: A comparison based on gender and living arrangements

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Abstract:
Globally and in South Africa, the fast-moving consumer goods sector continues to grow and remains one of the key contributors to the economy. Owing to the competitive nature of this sector, fast-moving consumer goods retailers are required to make use of various marketing techniques, such as sales promotions, to gain new customers and retain existing customers. To ensure the effectiveness of the sales promotions, it is essential that marketers understand their target market, especially the factors that influence their buying behaviour, such as gender and consumers’ living arrangements. The purpose of this paper is to determine whether differences exist between African Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards price and non-price promotions regarding low-involvement products based on their gender and living arrangements. Generation Y consumers make up approximately 34 percent of the South African population, of which 29 percent are represented by African Generation Y consumers. As such, the African Generation Y consumer segment is an important market segment to marketers, due to the size of the segment and their potential earning and spending power. By following a quantitative research approach, using a self-administered questionnaire, the required data was collected from a convenience sample of 543 African Generation Y students registered at two public higher education institutions, situated in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The data was analysed using reliability and validity analysis, descriptive statistics, an independent-samples t-test, Cohen’s d and one-way ANOVA. The findings revealed statistically significant differences between African Generation Y male and female consumers’ attitudes regarding brand switching and purchase acceleration when a price promotion is offered, and stockpiling when a non-price promotion is offered. Furthermore, no statistical differences were found between African Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards price and non-price promotions based on their living arrangements.

Keywords: Price promotion, non-price promotion, gender, living arrangements, low-involvement products

INTRODUCTION

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector is one of the key contributors to the global and South African economy (Jacobs & Mafini, 2019), and is predicted to grow in the future (Businesswire, 2019). In South Africa, the food, beverages and tobacco products in the specialised stores category were the largest contributor to the year-on-year increase in the retail trade sales for January 2022 (Stats SA, 2022). The FMCG sector comprises businesses in the informal sector as well as small businesses and larger supermarkets in the formal sector (Mitchell, 2021) that produce and sell non-durable products that are consumed regularly and quickly and are typically sold at low prices. These products are also referred to as consumer-packaged goods (CPG) or low-involvement products (LIP) and include products such as processed and frozen foods, beverages, tobacco and toiletries, among others (Davis, 2017). The competition in the FMCG sector is intense (Businesswire, 2019), as the businesses within this sector sell similar products and as a result, compete for the same customers (KPMG, 2014). In addition, these businesses not only have to compete with the traditional brick and mortar stores of their competitors, but also with the increasing number of online stores (Chotoki, 2021). Another factor that contributes to the intensified competition is the changes in consumers’ behaviour, as consumers are engaging in more online shopping (Mahlaka, 2021) and are becoming more price sensitive due to the continuous pressure on their disposable income (Mitchell, 2021). In an attempt to compete, retailers and manufacturers seek to convince consumers to buy their products and to do this, they frequently use sales promotions, among other marketing tools (KPMG, 2014). However, retailers, marketers and manufacturers are often faced with limited marketing budgets (Kirsch, 2021), which increases the pressure on marketers, retailers and manufacturers to select only the most effective marketing tools, of which sales promotion plays an important role (Aquino et al., 2019).
LITERATURE REVIEW

Sales promotion is one of the most effective tools that influences consumers’ decision-making (Aquino et al., 2019; Neha & Manoj, 2013), and ultimately, increases businesses’ sales, customer satisfaction and brand awareness (Smith, 2021). Sales promotion, as defined by Kotler and Armstrong (2021), refers to any short-term incentive used to encourage consumers or businesses to buy a product or service. As such, sales promotions can be directed at consumers or traders such as retailers or wholesalers (Keller, 2013). Sales promotions targeting the end consumer usually have the objective to influence the quantity, timing or choice of a consumer’s purchases (Keller, 2013). To achieve this, a variety of sales promotions are used and can be broadly classified as price-based or non-price-based promotions, where price-based promotions include techniques such as discounts, coupons and bonus packs (Nasir & Bal, 2016), while non-price-based promotions include techniques such as free merchandise and samples (Jones, 2019). In a study conducted by Inmar Intelligence (2021), it was found that a coupon incentive influenced 84 percent of the participants’ purchase decisions. In light of this, it is evident that sales promotions will likely remain popular among consumers in the near future. However, to ensure the effectiveness of sales promotions, it is essential to clearly understand how these sales promotions influence consumers’ buying behaviours (Nagar, 2009).

Sales promotions have different effects on consumers, and as a result, could entice different buying behaviours among consumers such as purchase acceleration, stockpiling, brand switching and product trial (Gilbert & Jackaria, 2002). Purchase acceleration refers to when a consumer buys a product or service earlier than planned, or needed, while stockpiling refers to when a consumer buys more quantities of a product than required. Brand switching occurs when a consumer buys a product or service brand other than what they usually buy, whereas product trial refers to when consumers buy a new product, service or brand that they have not bought previously (Gilbert & Jackaria, 2002; Kanwal & Lodhi, 2015; Mittal & Sethi, 2011). Although the literature suggests that a single sales promotion can entice more than one buying behaviour (Shi et al., 2005), the effect of sales promotions on these buying behaviours will depend on the product or service for which the promotion is offered and the consumers that are being targeted.

Marketers, retailers and manufacturers are realising the heterogeneity in consumers’ needs, and consequently, the important role of market segmentation in targeting consumers and understanding a specific target market’s needs (Kinsella, 2021; Schiffman, 2019). By understanding their target market and the differences or similarities in consumer decision-making, they are able to develop more effective marketing strategies, of which sales promotion plays a key role (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021; Nagar, 2009). One of the most popular methods of market segmentation is based on demographics, because of the ease of measurement, size of the segment and the potential relationship between consumers’ demographic factors and consumers’ behaviour (Kotler & Keller, 2012). When segmenting a market based on demographics, factors such as age, ethnicity, gender and living arrangements are used to gain an understanding of consumers’ behaviour (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021).

Generation Y consumers constitute those individuals who were born between the years 1986 and 2005 (Markert, 2004), currently between the ages of 17 and 36 years. Generation Y individuals are characterised as tech-savvy, independent (Howells, 2016) and highly influential (Fallon, 2021). These individuals are cautious of marketing tactics, making it challenging to market to these consumers (Fallon, 2021). However, it has been reported that they are susceptible to sales promotions such as rebates, discounts and coupons (Kats, 2019; Ketner, 2019). The student portion, in particular, is of interest to marketers, due to their potential future earnings and spending (Bevan-Dye, 2015). In South Africa, this consumer segment represents 34 percent of the total South African population, of which 84 percent of the 34 percent are African (part of the black ethnic group). This means that African Generation Y consumers represent 29 percent of the entire South African population (Stats SA, 2021).

Gender has widely been researched to gain an understanding of consumer behaviour, including buying behaviour (Sohail, 2015). Historically, shopping was regarded as a female activity; however, this has changed over the years as shopping among males has become more popular (Burke, 2021; Petro, 2019). Although shopping is no longer regarded as a gender-specific activity, it has been noted that the way in which males and females shop differs. According to Petro (2019), the majority of males are utilitarian shoppers, which requires purchasing products or services in the shortest amount of time and making decisions based on data and facts. Conversely, most females are hedonic shoppers who find pleasure in shopping. The differences in these shopping motivations highlight the importance of clearly understanding the role of gender in these consumers’ buying behaviours (TimesofIndia, 2021). Several studies have reported that gender differences are manifested in consumers’ attitudes (Das, 2014), shopping behaviours (Das, 2014; Kraljević & Filipović, 2017) and interest in sales promotions (Karthik & Sudheer, 2014; Saleh et al., 2013). In light of this, the following hypothesis was formulated:
H₁: There is a significant difference between male and female African Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards price and non-price promotions concerning the different LIP buying behaviours.

Another significant factor that affects consumer behaviour is a person’s living arrangements. Living arrangements refer to the composition or structure of a person’s household, with reference to the number of household members and the relationship between them (Russell & Breaux, 2019). Literature has revealed that the living arrangements of consumers could affect a wide range of consumer behaviours such as consumption behaviour (Ansari et al., 2012; Kombanda et al., 2022; Tan et al., 2016), usage behaviour (Demirović-Bajrami et al., 2020), recycling behaviour (Arangdad et al., 2019), as well as consumers’ attitudes (Kombanda et al., 2022). In accordance with the literature, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H₂: There is a significant difference between African Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards price and non-price promotions based on their living arrangements.

To give light on the influence of demographic factors on Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards sales promotions, this paper reports on a study conducted to determine whether differences exist between African Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards price and non-price promotions based on their gender and living arrangements. By understanding these differences, retailers, marketers and manufacturers could alter their marketing strategies to more effectively influence the buying behaviours of male or female consumers specifically.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive, single cross-sectional research design.

Sampling and data collection

The population of interest for this study was African Generation Y students between the ages of 18 and 24 years who were registered full-time for an undergraduate qualification at a South African public higher education institution (HEI). As such, the 26 public HEIs in South Africa were the sampling frame for this study. From the sampling frame, two HEIs in the Gauteng Province were selected by means of the non-probability judgement sampling method. A total of 300 participants were selected from each of the two participating HEIs, using the non-probability convenience sampling method. Prior to the distribution of the questionnaires, the required permission was obtained from the participating HEIs. The participants who agreed to participate were informed that they may withdraw from the study at any point in time.

Research instrument

The research instrument employed for this study was a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire included two sections, one that requested the participants’ demographic information and another that included statements measuring the participants’ attitudes towards price and non-price promotions regarding LIPs, to understand the effect of these sales promotions on the consumers’ buying behaviours. The scale used in Section B of the questionnaire was adapted from the measuring scale developed by Gilbert and Jackaria (2002). These scale items measured the effect of price and non-price promotions on the participants’ behaviour (product trial, purchase acceleration, stockpiling and brand switching). The participants indicated their agreement and disagreement with the 16 scaled items using a six-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 6= strongly agree). The questionnaire also included a cover letter that explained the purpose of the study and to ascertain that the participants’ anonymity is guaranteed.

Data analysis

The data was analysed using Version 27.0 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The statistical methods that were applied to analyse the data included frequencies, reliability and validity analysis, descriptive statistics, an independent samples t-test, Cohen’s d and one-way ANOVA.

FINDINGS

From the sample size of 300 participants per HEI, 543 questionnaires were complete and usable, which translates into a response rate of 90.5 percent. The majority of the sample were female participants (n=337), while the largest part of the sample were 20 years (n=137) of age, followed by those who indicated being 19 years (n=116) of age. Furthermore, 194 participants indicated that they live in a residence, while 160
participants live with other students. From the five participants who fell in the ‘other’ category, one indicated living with her husband, another living with a guardian, while two indicated living with a sibling and one participant failed to answer the question. The sample description is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Sample description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
<th>Living arrangements</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>On my own</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>With my parents</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>With other students</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21 years</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>In the residence</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22 years</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23 years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24 years</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To assess the internal consistency reliability and construct validity of the scale used, the Cronbach alpha and average inter-item correlation were computed for the entire scale. The results returned a Cronbach alpha value of 0.85, which exceeds the recommended value of 0.7 (Pallant, 2020) and therefore suggests internal consistency reliability. The average inter-item correlation value for the entire scale was 0.258, which fell within the recommended range of 0.15 to 0.5 (Clark & Watson, 1995), and therefore provides evidence that the scale measures consumers’ attitudes towards sales promotion regarding four buying behaviours. An independent samples t-test was used to determine whether there are differences in African Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards sales promotions relating to LIPs, based on their gender. The significance level was set at a five percent level. Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations (SD), t-values and p-values regarding male and female African Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards sales promotions.

Table 2: Differences in African Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards sales promotions in terms of gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price promotion</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>t-values</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand switching</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>-2.200</td>
<td>0.028**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase acceleration</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>-2.457</td>
<td>0.014*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockpiling</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>-1.384</td>
<td>0.167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product trial</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>0.378</td>
<td>0.706</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-price promotion</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>t-values</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand switching</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>0.166</td>
<td>0.868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase acceleration</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>-1.574</td>
<td>0.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockpiling</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>-2.153</td>
<td>0.032**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product trial</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>0.469</td>
<td>0.639</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at the 0.05 level

As presented in Table 2, statistically significant differences were found between African Generation Y male and female consumers’ attitudes towards price promotion regarding brand switching (p=0.028 < 0.05) and purchase acceleration (p=0.014 < 0.05). Furthermore, a statistically significant difference was found between African Generation Y male and female consumers’ attitudes towards non-price promotion concerning stockpiling (p=0.032 < 0.05). To determine the practical significance of these differences in attitudes towards price and non-price promotions between Generation Y male and female consumers, Cohen’s d was calculated. For price promotion concerning brand switching (d=0.196) and purchase acceleration (d=0.216), as well as for non-price promotion concerning stockpiling (d=196), the Cohen’s d values indicate a small effect (d=0.2) (Pallant, 2020). In view of the differences found regarding price promotion, it may be suggested that African Generation Y females are more likely than their male counterparts to switch brands (mean=4.28) or accelerate their purchases (mean=4.02) when offered a price promotion. When considering the differences regarding non-price promotions, African Generation Y female consumers are more willing to stockpile (mean=4.61) when offered a non-price promotion, compared to males. As such, H1 is accepted for price promotion regarding brand switching and purchase acceleration as well as for non-price promotion regarding stockpiling. However, for the remainder of the buying behaviours, H2 was rejected and H1 was accepted.

While not significant, the findings reveal that African Generation Y males are more likely to try a new product when offered both a price (mean=3.29) and non-price promotion (mean=3.87) compared to females. This could
be due to males generally using less information in their decision-making and following a simplified decision-making process (Reynolds, 2015; Rungruangjit, 2020). Furthermore, Sohail et al. (2017) explain that males are more prone to base their buying decisions on data and realism and, as a result, are more likely to try new products or brands in order to obtain new data.

In general, the findings of this study reveal that African Generation Y females have more favourable attitudes towards price promotions and are more likely to switch brands (mean=4.28), accelerate purchases (mean=4.02) and stockpile (mean=4.29) when offered a price promotion, compared to males. Similarly, African Generation Y females have more favourable attitudes towards non-price promotions and are more likely to accelerate purchases (mean=4.5) and stockpile (mean=4.61) when offered a non-price promotion, compared to males. These findings are in accordance with the findings of Saleh et al. (2013), who found that female consumers in grocery stores in Saudi Arabia are more responsive to non-price promotions such as free samples, than males are. Furthermore, Karthik and Sudheer (2014), who conducted a study in India, also reported similar findings in that females are more interested in price and non-price promotions when compared to their male counterparts. There are various reasons for Generation Y females to be more likely to exert specific buying behaviours when offered a sales promotion, such as females being generally more sensitive to prices than males (Kraljević & Filipović, 2017), shopping more frequently and being likely to be more involved and plan their LIP purchases than males (Meyers-Levy & Sternthal, 1991; Rungruangjit, 2020). Furthermore, females might be more attracted by the perceived benefits including savings, convenience and entertainment that are associated with sales promotions (Karthik & Sudheer, 2014).

One-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether differences in African Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards sales promotions exist based on their living arrangements. These differences were measured for price and non-price promotions across four buying behaviours. Table 3 below presents the ANOVA results.

**Table 3: Differences in African Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards sales promotions in terms of living arrangements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Price promotion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand switching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>5,844</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.461</td>
<td>1.111</td>
<td>0.351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>706.275</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>1.315</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>712.119</td>
<td>541</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase acceleration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>3.662</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.916</td>
<td>.626</td>
<td>0.644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>785.201</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>1.462</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>788.863</td>
<td>541</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockpiling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>5.812</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.453</td>
<td>1.006</td>
<td>0.404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>775.866</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>1.445</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>781.678</td>
<td>541</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product trial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>2.852</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.713</td>
<td>.423</td>
<td>0.792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>904.419</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>1.684</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>907.270</td>
<td>541</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-price promotion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand switching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>9,840</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.460</td>
<td>1.184</td>
<td>0.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>1115.665</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>2.078</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1125.506</td>
<td>541</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase acceleration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>7.289</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.822</td>
<td>0.844</td>
<td>0.497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>1158.800</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>2.158</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1166.089</td>
<td>541</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockpiling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>11.135</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.784</td>
<td>1.462</td>
<td>0.212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>1022.335</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>1.904</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1033.470</td>
<td>541</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product trial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>8.292</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.073</td>
<td>.836</td>
<td>0.503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>1332.091</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>2.481</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1340.384</td>
<td>541</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As evident in Table 3, there were no statistically significant (p > 0.05) differences identified between African Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards sales promotions based on their living arrangements and therefore H2 is rejected. This means that African Generation Y consumers do not significantly differ in their attitudes.
towards sales promotions across four buying behaviours, based on their living arrangements. As such, these consumers’ attitudes towards sales promotions are not affected by their living arrangements. This finding is in line with the findings of the study conducted by Demirović-Bajrami et al. (2020) in Serbia, who reported that no statistically significant differences were found between the frequency of consumers’ fast food consumption based on their living arrangements.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to determine whether differences exist between African Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards price and non-price promotions regarding LIPs, based on gender and their living arrangements. Given the changes in consumers’ buying behaviours and their sensitivity to product prices, coupled with manufacturers and retailers’ usage of sales promotions to remain competitive in the FMCG sector, it is important to gain an understanding of the factors that influence the effectiveness of sales promotions on inducing certain buying behaviours among consumers. The findings of the independent samples t-test indicate that statistically significant differences were found between African Generation Y male and female consumers’ attitudes towards price promotion concerning brand switching and purchase acceleration and their attitudes towards non-price promotion regarding stockpiling. The results of the one-way ANOVA revealed that no statistically significant differences were found between African Generation Y consumers’ attitudes towards price and non-price promotions based on their living arrangements.

In light of the findings, manufacturers, retailers and marketers in the FMCG sector should consider making use of price promotions and targeting female African Generation Y consumers when the objective is to persuade consumers to switch brands or to purchase products sooner than planned. In addition, non-price promotions could be implemented and directed at female African Generation Y consumers to encourage the purchase of more quantities of a product. However, when retailers or manufacturers want to encourage product trial for new products among African Generation Y consumers, it could be more effective to target male consumers and make use of either price or non-promotions to achieve the marketing objective.

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What a beautiful coffee: an eye-tracking study of the impact of packaging design on consumer preferences for instant coffee

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Abstract:
Product packaging is considered to be a factor influencing consumer choice (Hamlin, 2016). Creative packaging design can be a tool for creating a sensory and emotional experience (Barahona et al., 2020; Spinelli & Niedziela, 2016). However, until now there have been no studies to determine the impact of package design on consumer choice of instant coffee (Geel et al., 2005; Samoggia, & Riedel, 2018). This research aims to fill this gap using a neuromarketing approach. Based on a laboratory eye-tracking study (N=18) followed by an analysis of the results using the statistical Wilcoxon signed-rank test. As part of the study, we show respondents five different packages of instant coffee to identify significant areas in the packaging design. We found out that respondents tend to prefer packages that contain images of instant coffee granules. Zones with the image of coffee turned out to be the most significant, in comparison with other elements of packages such as logos, drawings, and colors. In addition, it turned out that respondents preferred the drawing of granules in the window, which were similar to real granules, and the picture in the shape of a heart made of coffee beans placed on the package. Our analysis also revealed a pattern of packaging choices among respondents. 14 respondents out of 18 chose the packaging as the final choice, which they spent the most time viewing when they first presented the collage image with all the packages. The most preferred packaging among respondents (7 out of 18) was a package with a window showing instant coffee granules and drawings on the theme of coffee such as coffee beans, mugs, and sugar bowls. The packaging was a neutral beige color, which respondents noted as the most associated with coffee. Our results provide useful information to instant coffee producers and package design teams.

Keywords: instant coffee, packaging design, consumer preferences, eye-tracking

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An adjusted model for measuring customer satisfaction in e-services. Evidence from the Greek e-banking industry

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Introduction
The rapid and continuous evolution of technology and the development of new innovations, mainly in the field of information and communication technologies (ICTs), have led businesses worldwide to adopt new tools and to create new products for the customer. Many sectors (such as e-services, e-commerce) have made maximum use of ICTs, in order to build a variety of distribution channels for customer satisfaction through e-services (Sandhu and Arora, 2020; Ayo et al., 2016; De Ruyter et al., 2001). Especially, the e-banking sector is conceived as the service provided to customers that enables account access and transaction performing (such as purchases) through the use of internet (Daniel, 2000). This kind of service includes different e-channels, such as internet, telephone, TV, mobile, and computer (Lustsik, 2004), through which customers can have access to their account from anywhere and at any time with lower cost (Yoon and Steege, 2013). Convenient that might be for service receivers under the current SARS-COV-II pandemic, remains challenging for service providers, since it shapes a new level of outreach to the consumer, by modifying the existing quality of service provided. There is an urge to respond to this technology-led, better and more direct depiction of customer needs by assessing the levels of e-service quality so as to understand the extent to which customers are satisfied. This could enable the way to improve existing services and develop new ones. But, the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction has been under examination in literature, since there are both differences (Rust and Oliver, 1994; Oliver 1993a; Patterson and Johnson, 1993; Taylor and Baker, 1994) as well as links between them (Yang and Fang, 2004; Kumbhar, 2011; Ping et al., 2012; De Ruyter et al., 1997).

The most popular and easy to use tool for measuring service quality remains until today is the SERVQUAL tool developed by (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988). SURVQUAL includes five main dimension of quality such as: tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. But SERVQUAL is based on the difference between expectations and perceptions which could not be equal to customer satisfaction, since one could form perceptions yet not receiving the service. Thus, this gap formed the background for developing an adjusted form of SERVQUAL, able to measure the satisfaction of the customer – user of specific services (i.e., e-banking).

This study aims to measure customer satisfaction by employing a popular tool used in service quality measurement and modifying it so as to be able to receive and analyze customer judgments.

Methodology & Results
Research methods & results for the creation of the conceptualization model
This research aims to measure customer satisfaction of e-banking sector in Greece through the use of adjusted form of SERVQUAL. For this purpose the first step is the conceptualization of the abovementioned adjusted form of SERVQUAL with the use of literature review and focus group methods. The focus group method was employed because it has comparative advantages among the other qualitative research methods (Morgan, 1996). Specifically, researchers can understand, interpret, and analyze members’ perspectives more quickly, easily, and cost-effectively than other qualitative research methods (Xanthopoulou et al., 2021; Morgan, 1996; Wang & Wiesemes, 2012). The focus group consisted of four bankers and three academics with more than five years experience in quality management, and their work was the transformation of SERVQUAL model to customer satisfaction measurement tool in e-banking sector. The members of the focus group received by email the interview protocol and the informed consent form, which reassured their confidentiality and anonymity. During fourth quarter of 2019 interview was conducted by teleconference and was tape-recorded in Greek. Besides the
interviewees, an experienced facilitator and an observer from the research team participated in focus group to reassure the quality of using this method by minimizing results bias (Xanthopoulou et al., 2021; Conway et al., 2018).

From the discussion of the focus group emerged three dimensions of customer satisfaction measurement based on adjusted form of SERVQUAL, namely Performability, Responsiveness, and Assurance. Firstly, the focus group made a decision to merge the traditional dimension of Tangibles and Reliability under the concept of Performability which include the dimensions of usability, such as easy to learn, engaging, effectiveness and efficiency. In addition, the dimension of Empathy was eliminated from a adjusted Servqual due to the e-business nature which is more technology-oriented. Finally, the dimensions of Responsiveness and Assurance were unchanged. Consequently, the 5-dimension SERVQUAL model was transformed to 3-dimension model under the concept of adjusted form of SERVQUAL. Drawing on the abovementioned synoptic literature review in the introductory section, our research hypotheses are:

Thus, our research hypotheses are:

H1: Performability will be positively related to customer satisfaction
H2: Responsiveness will be positively related to customer satisfaction
H3: Assurance will be positively related to customer satisfaction

**Research methods for the quantitative confirmation of the conceptual model**

The final step is the test of construct validity and reliability of the abovementioned conceptual model. Specifically, we developed a structured on-line questionnaire with a 5-degree Likert scale (1: I strongly disagree-5: I strongly agree). The questionnaire’s structure is the following:

- 7 questions for “Performability”
- 3 questions for “Assurance” and
- 4 questions for “Responsiveness”

Surveys were e-mailed randomly through the Google-forms platform during the first quarter of 2020. A total of 333 questionnaires were received, all usable for analysis, providing a response rate of 32.44%, which is considered acceptable (Yu and Cooper, 1983).

For quantitative analysis, a version of the survey instrument was pre-tested by fifteen e-banking users, so as to determine content validity. Based on the comments, the instrument was modified slightly to increase content validity and clarity. Empirical indicators are considered to have content validity if they are logically, as well as theoretically, connected to the conceptual constructs (Nunnally, 1978). Since the survey questions were derived from an extensive literature review and they were also pre-tested, the measures were generally considered to have content validity.

For construct validity test we used exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis (EFA and CFA) with the use of Jamovi software. For this purpose our sample divided randomly in two samples (sample 1=100 responses, and sample 2=233 responses), where the sample 1 was used for EFA and the sample 2 for CFA.

Specifically, before doing EFA we estimated the Barlett Test of Sphericity (p-value<0.01) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) (0.901>0.6), and the results indicated that data were appropriate for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1970). For EFA we used, varimax method, eigenvalues greater than 1.00 and accepted factor loadings of 0.5 and above (Hair et al., 1998). In addition, items with similar loading on two factors were removed. For CFA we used statistics tests like Tucker Lewis index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), and root mean square of error approximation (RMSEA) in order to test the model fit.

In addition we used the “Smart PLS 3.2” software for the assessment of measurement and structural model by means of partial least squares (PLS) structural equation modeling (SEM) (Ringle et al., 2014). PLS-SEM gaining increased popularity over the years in social sciences (Hair et al., 2017) and recently on customer satisfaction and quality research (see Ayo et al., 2016). We selected the PLS-SEM because it has several advantages when compared to the traditional covariance-based SEM techniques such as: a) there are not distributional assumptions of normality, while it can be used to analyze data from small samples, b) PLS-SEM incorporates both formative and reflective constructs and hierarchical component models (HCMs), giving us the chance to reduce the number of relationships in the structural model, and making the PLS path model more parsimonious and easier to grasp (Hair et al., 2014, p. 229). In our conceptual model, “customer satisfaction” was operationalized as “reflective-formative” higher-order component. The hierarchical component measurement model was created by using the “repeated indicators approach” combined with the “two-step approach” (see Hair et al., 2017, pp. 230-233; Lowry and Gaskin, 2014, p. 135). Specifically, “customer satisfaction” consisted of the Performability, Responsiveness, and Assurance. The reflective-formative HCM and the proposed model are depicted in Figure 1. For reflective indicators convergent validity and reliability were estimated with the use of AVE, Cronbach α and composite reliability (CR) (Hair et al., 2017). For
discriminant validity we used the “Fornell-Lacker”, and the “Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio” (HTMT<0.85 or 0.9) criteria.

Figure 1: The proposed model

For formative indicator (customer satisfaction”) we examined the “multicollinearity” by the “Variance Inflation Factors” (VIF) (Cenfetelli and Basseler, 2009) (VIF<3.33 or 5.0).

Finally, the bootstrapping procedure was applied (500 randomly drawn samples) for the structural model analysis.

Results of quantitative analysis
EFA using varimax rotation was conducted to test the emergence of three factors of e-banking customer satisfaction (Performability, Responsiveness, and Assurance) based on the abovementioned conceptual model. Analysis was performed on 14 items for this study. The output of EFA is the creation of three factors (Factor 1: Performability, Factor 2: Assurance, Factor 3: Responsiveness).

The first order CFA results indicated the fit indices values as: CFI= 0.966, TLI=0.957, SRMR=0.0514, and RMSEA=0.0767. These results are indicative of good model fit. According to Hair et al. (2009) the acceptable values of fit indices are: CFI>0.95, TLI>0.95, SRMR<0.08, and RMSEA<0.08. Thus, the CFA results indicated a good model fit.

PLS-SEM analysis
Construct Validity Reliability of the measurement model
As observed in Table 1, all AVE and CR scores were in the acceptable level (factor loadings>0.5, Cronbach α>0.7, AVE>0.5, CR>0.7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>loadings</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
<th>Composite Reliability</th>
<th>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>assurance</td>
<td>0.949</td>
<td>0.967</td>
<td>0.907</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protection of personal data</td>
<td>0.805</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>privacy (quest 23)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction of security</td>
<td>0.855</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level (quest 24)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security of transactions</td>
<td>0.808</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(quest 25)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performability</td>
<td>0.896</td>
<td>0.921</td>
<td>0.659</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of use (quest 17)</td>
<td>0.794</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable of e-services</td>
<td>0.781</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(quest 16)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Online services satisfaction (quest 10) 0.765
Website satisfaction (quest 11) 0.737
Access hour (quest 15) 0.717
E-transaction effectiveness (quest 13) 0.699
Efficiency of e-transaction (quest 14) 0.602
Responsiveness 0.922 0.945 0.812
Employees willingness (quest 18) 0.770
Support to the users (quest 20) 0.750
Problems solutions (quest 21) 0.814
Employee Knowledge (quest 19) 0.831

Additionally, discriminant validity was achieved, as Fornell-Lacker (Table 2) and HTMT criteria (Table 3) were satisfied.

### Table 2: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Assurance</th>
<th>Performability</th>
<th>Responsiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>0.952</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performability</td>
<td>0.566</td>
<td>0.812</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>0.624</td>
<td>0.476</td>
<td>0.901</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Assurance</th>
<th>Performability</th>
<th>Responsiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performability</td>
<td>0.608</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>0.664</td>
<td>0.518</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Structural model assessment

The result of the VIF estimation is acceptable while VIF<3.33 (Hair et al., 2017)

### Structural model analysis

For the structural model analysis, the bootstrapping procedure was applied (500 randomly drawn samples) (Table 4). Table 4 presents that Performability ($\beta$=0.464, p<0.001), Responsiveness ($\beta$=0.390, p<0.001), and Assurance ($\beta$=0.345, p<0.001) are positively and significantly related to customer satisfaction. Thus, these findings support our hypotheses (H1, H2, and H3).

### Table 4: structural model analysis through the bootstrapping procedure

|                              | Original Sample (O) | Sample Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (STDEV) | T Statistics (|O/STDEV|) | P Values |
|------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Assurance -> customer satisfaction | 0.343               | 0.345           | 0.021                       | 16.660                     | 0.000    |
| Performability -> customer satisfaction | 0.463               | 0.464           | 0.022                       | 20.820                     | 0.000    |
| Responsiveness -> customer satisfaction | 0.390               | 0.390           | 0.018                       | 21.517                     | 0.000    |

### Discussion & Conclusion

Literature abounds with models measuring perceived satisfaction based on the services customers experience. Most researchers aim to understand what triggers satisfaction, because according to Oly Ndubisi (2007) customer satisfaction influences customer’s life time loyalty with the service offered. Bartikowski & Llosa (2004) contend that a promising approach for assessing customer satisfaction is to find out and measure which service attributes favorably influence customer satisfaction and which inhibit it. Thus, they categorize according to attributes access the measurement techniques in direct and indirect. Direct approaches are those that directly ask respondents to weight attributes (such as the Kano model) whereas indirect are those that are statistically
inferred from observed associations with customer satisfaction (SERVQUAL). In the latter case regression analysis could be employed between the predictive variables and customer satisfaction.

The main finding of our study are as follows. Firstly, by reviewing the literature on the banking sector (table 2) we could reach the conclusion that indirect methods are frequently used to estimate customer satisfaction. Researchers seem to be interested in investigating the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality mainly by developing and testing hypotheses linking the two constructs, based on customer judgments. Although useful these studies are based on inferences about the importance customers give to different service attributes. Thus, there is a lack in literature on customer satisfaction measurement for a tool with the ability to receive and analyze judgments based on a combination between direct and indirect methods. Secondly, we addressed this gap by employing the SERVQUAL tool in a novel way and altered the questions so as to directly ask respondents about the importance of different service quality dimensions that affect their satisfaction. The e-banking customer satisfaction measurement tool developed, includes three dimensions, namely, “Performability”, “Responsiveness”, and “Assurance”. The dimension of “Performability” emerged from the focus group of experts and combines aspects of “Reliability” and “Tangibles” that could be familiar with an e-service, such as ease of use, time- and content- accurate information and transactions. We disregarded the dimension of “Empathy” due to low loadings, which seems to make sense because this dimension requires human interaction that e-service lacks. Thirdly, the measurement scale used for this study is highly reliable and validated in the Greek e-banking service. However, this study was conducted in the Greek context, limiting the generalizability of research results. Further research could be conducted to generalize findings in other e-service sectors around the world, since evaluating customer satisfaction could improve e-commerce functioning.

**Keywords:** e-banking, Survqual, customer satisfaction, PLS, Greece

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Rust, R. T. and Oliver, R. L. (1994) 'Service quality: Insights and managerial implications from the frontier' in


Healthcare service ecosystem: enhance the consumer and service entities well-being

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**ABSTRACT**

The investigation of service ecosystems' influence on human and planet well-being has been pointed out as a priority in service research, and more studies are required to understand how to develop and design sustainable service ecosystems (Field et al., 2021). Healthcare service ecosystems evolve continuously and are characterised by high levels of complexity and specific actors (Frow et al., 2019; Chandler and Vargo, 2011). Many stakeholders are included in the value co-creation process integrating and combining resources and starting collaboration mechanisms at political, social, economic, legal, operational or ethical levels (Ciasullo et al., 2016; Polese and Capunzo, 2013). Moreover, during the years, the healthcare sector has experienced a transformation, and increasing attention has been paid to the concept of the well-being of all actors involved (Mugion and Menicucci, 2020). Indeed, the role of services in influencing well-being has been identified as a research priority (Ostrom et al., 2015), and a new research field has emerged the Transformative Service Research (TSR), which is defined as the "service research that centres on creating uplifting changes and improvements in the well-being of consumer entities: individuals (consumers and employees), communities and the ecosystem" (Anderson et al., 2011, 2013) to study the interrelation between services and well-being. Healthcare is defined as transformative by design because it has a clear transformative mission (Rosenbaum et al., 2011), and it represents a rich field for investigation (Rai, 2018). Moreover, TSR and healthcare are highly connected because the service providers can impact individual and societal well-being (Anderson et al., 2013; Ungaro et al., 2021). The relevance of the healthcare service for society is also highlighted by Goal 3 in the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, the Covid-19 emergency that we have experienced during the last two years confirmed the universal value of health and its nature as a fundamental public good (Ornell et al., 2020).

Against the above backdrop, the present study aims to investigate the interactions between service entities and consumer entities in the healthcare service ecosystem to identify the impacts on their well-being. Specifically, the goal of the analysis is to understand the main types of healthcare service studied, the actors involved, the activities/practices carried out, the well-being outcomes, and the transformative impacts, identifying potential pillars for creating a sustainable healthcare service ecosystem. To achieve the research aim, the examination of the contribution of TSR to the healthcare sector is performed by a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) along with the development of a qualitative study.

As a first step, a systematic literature review method is applied, adopting a systematic quantitative approach (Pickering & Byrne, 2014; Pickering et al., 2015). The keywords "Transformative Service Research", "Health*", and "Healthcare" were input in two research databases, Scopus and Web of Science, and 79 articles published between 2011 and 2021 were analysed. Then a qualitative approach was planned, and an empirical investigation was carried out through in-depth interviews with ten physicians working in hospitals. An interview guide was developed based on the literature analysis. They were audio-recorded and then transcribed; the text analysis software MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2020 was utilised to study, code, and interpret each phrase. The data were examined using a thematic analysis based on the six phases identified by Braun and Clarke (2006). Multiple investigators were involved in the coding activity to guarantee the rigour of the research.

Starting from the SLR, the authors provided an analysis of the paper's bibliometric characteristics. Then they presented a summary of the main healthcare services explored, the principal category of patients investigated, the focal actors involved and their activities. The authors observed that there are more empirical than conceptual research, and they also provided a map of the countries in which the studies were developed. Moreover, the results were propaedeutic for the development of the second phase. From the qualitative analysis, the authors identified four themes: organisational support, physician-patient interaction, innovations and technologies, and servicescape that describe the main dimensions in which the transformation can occur to enhance the well-being
of both service and consumer entities. Finally, the current gaps are identified, and an agenda for future research is provided.

Hence, it has emerged from the present paper that the healthcare service providers' ability to develop an adequate and sustainable service plays a significant role in affecting patients and other actors' well-being as also the service entities. However, the authors highlighted the need to develop more studies to investigate how to create a sustainable ecosystem and continue to expand this field. The current paper is the first to perform a systematic quantitative literature review on TSR in the healthcare sector and investigate the transformative effects on service providers and other involved actors.

**Key words** (max 5) – transformative service research; systematic literature review; well-being; healthcare; service systems

**Paper type** – Literature review and empirical research

**References**


Consumer behaviour and food waste: Evidence from Greece

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Abstract:
Food waste can be characterized as one of the most complicated modern problems. The complexity of the problem lies in the necessity of action and involvement by the consumers. According to the literature review, the need for prevention and reduction of food waste calls for an alteration of consumer behaviour regarding food purchasing, food preparation and food disposal. Food waste has been in the researchers' epicentre for more than a decade, especially after the declaration and establishment of the UN Agenda 2030 and the respective SDGs that highlighted the necessity of food waste reduction to 50% at the consumer level.

In Greece, there is still a research gap that needs to be filled with new and updated studies. This paper presents the results obtained from a nationwide survey with 1238 participants that took place from November 2021 to February 2022, exclusively through a structured electronic questionnaire distributed electronically. Among others, the results indicate a high degree of awareness by the Greek consumers relative to the food waste problem, the necessity of changes regarding the “best before” and “due date” labelling, participants’ behaviour relative to the planning of next week’s meals and the list of food categories ending up in the trash. Finally, a cluster analysis is performed having as a base specific behaviour relative to food waste and revealing significant differences among four types of consumers.

Keywords: food waste, consumer behaviour, Greece, cluster analysis

References (indicative):


Factors Influencing Consumers Attitude Towards Online Shopping for Airline Tickets

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**Abstract**

Due to the increase in Internet usage, the e-commerce industry has been booming as more consumers shop online. Despite the increase in online sales, little is known about the factors that affect online airline ticket sales in South Africa. The purpose of this study is to determine the factors that influence consumers’ decision to shop online for airline tickets. A survey method was used to collect data from 200 airline ticket shoppers. The data were analysed via the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Multi-Regression Analysis (MRA) methods. The findings of this study show that usefulness and convenience are the key drivers of online airline tickets shopping. In order to provide superior customer service, airline companies need to provide customers with useful features on their websites in a convenient way.

**Keywords:** online shopping; usefulness; ease of use; convenience; pricing; privacy
Behavioral Pricing

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Introduction

Pricing is part of the marketing mix and one of the most important decisions for any company. Setting the right prices for the products or services that a company offers in the market, is a very demanding process. That is because the final price of a product translates indirectly any business activity into sales and profits for the business and determines, to a great extent, its financial success and long-term survival in the market. Moreover, contrary to other company tools, pricing is the most flexible element in that pricing decisions can be made and implemented relatively quickly (Hinterhuber, 2015; Liozu, 2015). Companies can adjust their prices easily to the competition, yet they are at risk of sending the wrong signal to the customers, concerning the quality of the product.

Not only pricing is important for the companies and the consumers, but it is of great significance from a macroeconomic point of view. The recent trends within the European Union and worldwide, especially after the pandemic, the rise of inflation and the broader political situations, have led both politicians and national and international authorities and governments to take actions towards protecting citizens (e.g., imposition of upper price levels in specific product categories).

Judgements of expected inflation are especially important for economic decisions with consequences beyond the immediate present (such as saving, investing and borrowing) that require consumers to take into account the expected inflation rate (Ranyard et al., 2008). The pandemic itself along with the current turbulence in the political field have added more pressure to the prices. Many governments are considering of imposing a price “ceiling” when it comes to oil prices since a number of different business sectors have been dramatically affected by these trends, affecting and challenging the well-being of citizens. Citizens are likely to become even more price sensitive which will lead to an advanced interest about how the prices are set.

Key Words: Behavioral Pricing, Consumer Behavior, Services Sector

Literature Review

A review of the existing pricing literature reveals a consensus among academics, researchers and practitioners regarding the importance of understanding customers’ responses to different prices if effective pricing decisions are to be made. For instance, Shipley and Jobber (2001, p. 304) have argued, “a clear understanding of price sensitivities in different price levels… is key to effective pricing”. Similarly, Nagle and Holden (2001, p. 323) have suggested, “…Without such knowledge one cannot develop tactics for segmented pricing or discover product augmentations or promotional themes to influence the importance of price in the purchase decision. Managers who try to substitute a single number for a more complete understanding of their buyers’ purchase motivations are likely to miss profitable opportunities”. Thus, thorough understanding and examination of customers’ potential responses to different price levels may aid a company to implement successful pricing practices.

The above arguments are in line with a number of empirical studies that have been conducted in the field of pricing and, among else, emphasize the importance of taking customer related factors into account when levying prices. For instance, Indounas (2019) examined the concept of market-based pricing, Guerreiro and Amaral (2018) focused on the differences between cost-based and value-based pricing, while Formentini and Romano (2016) underlined the importance of supply chain collaboration in effective pricing.

Given the importance of treating pricing from a customer point of view, a multidisciplinary scientific field, namely behavioral pricing, has emerged. In particular, based, mainly, on the sciences of economics, psychology, neuroscience and marketing, it is considered a novel academic field the aim of which is to examine how customers react to different price stimuli (Estelami, 2012). Famous scientists from all the above sciences, such as Kahneman and Tversky (2000) and Nagle and Holden (2001) have
contributed to its evolution. However, despite its novelty, it’s still considered as a relatively under searched topic.

Regarding the role of economics, economists almost universally assume that buyers behave rationally, in the sense that their preferences are stable and self-consistent, so that the psychic satisfaction or “utility” they can derive from their purchases can be maximized. Thus, it is assumed, buyers always act so as to maximize their utility. The maximization of utility is, of course, subject to certain constraints, prime among which is obviously the income or purchasing power at the disposal of the buyer. But other constraints are also recognized, such as inadequate or false information and cost of search-time, which lead to utility-maximization albeit of a constrained character. Consequently, buyers’ response to prices is, according to economics, an exercise in utility-maximization under constraints.

Psychology has contributed towards understanding the feelings and thoughts that are created by certain prices. In particular, based on the function stimuli-thoughts/feelings-behavior, prices, through numbers, act as stimuli that lead to certain thoughts/feelings and subsequent behaviors. Neuroscience has attempted to examine how human brain processes numbers and prices in terms, among else, of calculations made or reading prices from left to right. Neuroscientific tools have been used for quantitative evaluation of marketing stimuli, for example, advertising communications, brand images, pricing decisions, and value preference evaluation helping researchers to deal with some of the limitations of the traditional research methods have (Harris et al., 2018).

Contrary to economics, marketing has not been constrained or inhibited in its treatment of rationality. Lack of perfect rationality, as suggested by casual observation and introspection, is thus an obvious starting point for the study of consumer behavior to be investigated for its implications regarding the advantageous setting of prices by firms. Thus, the lack of perfect rationality, together with the absence of full information on which buyers’ rational decisions might be made, have been analyzed extensively within the marketing literature through different theoretical underpinnings.

Moreover, a multidisciplinary review of the existing literature on behavioral pricing reveals that this concept has various dimensions-aspects and has been examined from different angles and perspectives. Although a universally accepted definition of these angles and perspectives does not exist, Table 1 summarizes these key underlying theoretical dimensions.

Table 1. The different dimensions-aspects of behavioral pricing as identified in the existing multidisciplinary literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price-quality relationship.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Weber-Fechner “law”, according to which buyers tend to perceive price differences in proportional rather than in absolute term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buyers perceive prices from left to right and calculate differences between pairs of prices taking into account only the more important digits on the left.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers’ formation of their reference prices is affected by the way that prices are presented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The prospect theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The assimilation and contrast effects theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odd-even pricing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of perfect price knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price is not always the most important purchase criterion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The impact of demographics on customers’ evaluation of prices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contribution of the study

As in the case of any scientific topic, a critical review of the relevant literature reveals a number of potential theoretical “gaps” which leave space for future studies that endeavor to a) fill these gaps, and b) be in line with the criteria set by the European Research Council (ERC) Horizon Program regarding what constitutes an interesting research-study. In particular, regarding point a, the aforementioned review leads to the conclusion that different authors have attempted to focus on certain aspects of the above theoretical underpinnings (e.g., Coulter, 2002; Estelami, 2012; Huber et al., 2001; Liozu and Hinterhuber, 2013; Suri et al., 2004) from an empirical point of view. An empirical study that emphasizes on all the above dimensions of behavioral pricing seems to be lacking.

Second, the majority of the studies, so far, focus on small samples (less than 500 subjects). There seems to be a lack of empirical studies consisted of large samples (e.g., thousands of participants) that give the chance to make potential results more generalizable in their nature.

Third, the premise of the relevant studies is a quantitative research based on the collection of questionnaires. This fact notwithstanding, the complexity characterizing behavioral pricing might necessitate larger studies focusing on a combination of different research approaches (e.g., both secondary
and primary research through qualitative and quantitative research simultaneously). A combination of both research approaches would lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon while enabling the goal of making generalisable statements from an objectivist framework.

Fourth, these studies are mainly based on literature derived from one of the scientific fields (i.e., economics, psychology, neuroscience and marketing) presented above and, thus, lack a multidisciplinary perspective.

Fifth, these studies focus mainly on physical products. Docters et al. (2004) have suggested, “Pricing of services has long been given less attention than product pricing” although services have become an increasingly important part of the economy-and a bigger source of profit for many companies-the need to understand service pricing has grown”. However, services are characterized by unique elements (i.e., intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, perishability) which make their pricing more challenging than physical products (Farquhar and Meidan, 2010; Zietsman et al., 2019). This argument is intensified by the fact that, nowadays, the services sector constitutes an important part of the economy of many European countries in terms of Gross Domestic Product or number of employees occupied. According to European Commission (2022a) “Services are crucial to the EU economy. They account for around 70% of the EU’s GDP and an equal share of its employment”. To this end, given the limited services pricing literature on behavioral pricing along with the important role of the services field in the European Union, future studies focusing on this topic might be worthwhile. In order to investigate how extensive is the use of behavioral pricing practice by service organizations operating in Greece, there has been a selection of certain sub-sectors, which could be considered mostly significant for every national economy. Because of its diversity, the Services Sector includes services targeted at business customers which are not completely visible, therefore the national economic statistics are a useful tool. Indicative of the diversity is the following Table 2, where one can find the main Sectors of Services that are being monitored by the Hellenic Statistical Authority (2022a):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Sectors of the Greek Service industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Services Main Sectors</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Service Activities Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and Communication sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Business Services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Services main sectors

Services Sector includes a vast number of sub-sectors and it would be almost impossible to investigate all the existing sectors. In this context, it would be more appropriate to focus on these sub-sectors that are considered mostly important for every national economy, and their contribution to Gross Domestic Product is a key element. In order to comprehend the importance of the Services Sector in Greek economy one can see its contribution to the Greek Gross Domestic Product, as it is presented in the following Table 3 (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2022b).
Table 3: Greek Gross Domestic Product Per Sector (2021)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Greece</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</td>
<td>6,453</td>
<td>4.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry including construction</td>
<td>30,284</td>
<td>19.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>121,451</td>
<td>76.97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sixth, the above studies are based on studying human and consumer behavior in traditional off-line environments. The pandemic, however, has changed the way that European citizens behave and consume. A large percentage of the workforce was forced to start working from home amongst other changes that led to an extent use of internet services, giving an even greater boost in the Services Sector growth and demanding new elements to be researched. In terms of e-commerce according to Hellenic Statistical Authority, 6 out of 10 (58.3%) persons aged 16-74 having accessed the internet even once, in the first quarter of 2021, purchased or ordered goods or services over the internet for private purposes (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2021) with the numbers demonstrating a clear upwards tendency. Furthermore, the digital gap among European countries has been decreased and more and more citizens, regardless of their country of origin, turn on-line in order to make their purchase decisions. This has led many businesses operating on-line to also adopt some of the practices of behavioral pricing, as described above. Thus, it might be interesting to study, apart from off-line prices, how consumers and buyers evaluate on-line prices. In addition, companies might find a helpful tool to use concerning the aforementioned absence of full information on which buyers’ rational decisions might be made, due to existence of a vast variety of information concerning their buying behavior.

Research aims and objectives

Building from the above arguments, the fundamental aims of the current research are the following:
- To examine the concept of behavioral pricing in the services field by focusing on all the different dimensions of this concept, as described in the previous section. The aforementioned ten dimensions are going to be thoroughly examined, in terms of finding out whether they are detectable by the consumers, once they are used by the companies. To what extent can a consumer comprehend that a company utilizes that kind of pricing policy?
- To carry out a large-scale empirical study based on different methodological approaches.

In doing so, the following research objectives have been formulated:
1. To investigate how customers perceive and evaluate the final prices that are derived as an outcome of the practices related to the above dimensions.
2. To map the contextual variables, which are associated with both customers (e.g., demographic and psychographic personal characteristics) and their environment and facilitate the effectiveness of behavioral pricing.
3. To shed some light on how managers responsible for price decision making within their firms perceive the principles of behavioral pricing.
4. To provide theoretical and managerial implications regarding ways towards the effective implementation of behavioral pricing.

Methodology

In order to achieve the aforementioned research aims and objectives and in line with the expected contribution of the study, as stated above, the study will be conducted in Greece.
Its proposed methodology consists of three stages each one of which will be accompanied by a detailed scientific report:

1. **Secondary research**: The aim of this stage is to carry out a profound review of the existing literature on behavioral pricing by focusing on its ten different dimensions that are depicted in Table 1.

2. **Primary qualitative research**: The aim of this stage is to gain a better understanding of the research problem and design more effectively the research instrument that will be used in the primary quantitative research at the next stage. Also, comparing with other studies that have been carried out from either a consumer or business point of view, the current study will try to incorporate both these inputs by being undertaken through the following two steps:
   a. **Focus groups** with consumers of services: These focus groups will be consisted of 6-8 people and their fundamental objective will be to gain insights regarding how consumers perceive the different dimensions of behavioral pricing.
b. Personal in-depth interviews with managers responsible for setting prices within their service firms. The advantage of these interviews is that interviewees have the chance to discuss the research problem in person without being influenced by the presence of other participants (Burns et al., 2016).

3. Primary quantitative research: The aim of this stage is to provide quantifiable results (Aaker et al., 2018). Through the use of numerical figures, the study will come up with how different variables of the study are interrelated to each other (e.g., are there any differences among consumers of different services regarding how they perceive behavioral pricing?). In doing so, proper mathematical and statistical analyses and techniques will be employed.

4. Sample and Data Collection

Choosing the right sample, especially when it comes to using qualitative methods is a key factor of success (McDougall and Fudge, 2001). Determining the exact sample size of a qualitative survey is also a demanding process, which is not subject to specific rules and formulas. For this reason, the number of participants is not easy to determine in advance, but instead in many cases it arises from the very needs of the research and the type of information required.

Primary qualitative research

a. Focus Groups

The proposed formation is shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Proposed focus groups’ formation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Type of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>Consumers between the ages of 18-35 living in rural areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>Consumers between the ages 36-55 in rural areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>Consumers between the ages of 18-35 living in the countryside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>Consumers between the ages of 36-55 in the countryside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>Control group—Random choice of participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Personal in-depth interviews

Services Sector includes a vast number of sub-sectors and it is almost impossible to investigate all the existing sectors. With a view to broadening the generalizability of the findings (Aaker et al., 2013), a cross-industry population will be included. Avlonitis and Indounas (2005) suggest that it should be more appropriate to focus on those sub-sectors that may be considered as being significant for every national economy, namely banks Insurance Companies, transportation and shipping companies, Airline Companies, Information technology companies, medical services, Education services. With consideration to the total turnout of each subsector the impact on Greece’s economy in terms of GDP and number of people employed, the current market trends such innovativeness and technology the list of the sub-sectors to be monitored is (Table 5):

Table 5: Services Sub-sectors to be monitored

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services-Sub sectors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer programming, consultancy and related activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance Companies-Banks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation-shipping companies &amp; airlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation- Hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postal and courier activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regarding the “Computer programming, consultancy and related activities” it is apparent that due to the digitalization of the economy this sub-sector is one of the most promising and dynamic ones, having a significant role in today’s marketplace. “Insurance Companies”, due to the increased concern about health, that has risen throughout the pandemic and the insecurity people might feel concerning the future. “Banks” play a significant role in every country’s economy and they are moving on to a new era where they offer a new bundle of services to the customers. “Transportation” especially because of the pandemic the and the challenges that European countries are facing due to political reasons are becoming even more important. Transportation in general, has become even more important nowadays facing many challenges concerning global supply chains with the value of global trade reaching a record level of about US$ 28.5 trillion in 2021, an increase of about 25 per cent relative to 2020 and an increase of about 13 per cent relative to the pre-pandemic level of 2019 (United Nations, 2022). Postal and courier activities refer to: pickup, sorting, transport and delivery (domestic or international) of letter-post and (mail-type) parcels and packages by firms operating outside the scope of a universal service obligation. Especially during the pandemic, the necessity for this type of services increased dramatically (European Commission - Joint Research Centre, 2022). “Accommodation” along with “Travel agency, tour operator reservation service and related activities SMEs” form the backbone of the Greek’s Tourism a sub-sector of extreme importance for the Greek economy.

References


Digital Marketing
Digital Transformation and Innovation in Food Ecosystems: The Case of the Italian Slow Food Movement

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-- Extended abstract --

The role of innovation ecosystems in fostering innovation has been established in the academic literature since the seminal studies in the late 1980s (Lundvall et al., 1988; Moore, 1993). Although there are calls to better understand the nature, formation, and development of innovation ecosystems, current research broadly agrees on what characteristics constitute their boundaries, structures, and coordination (Autio, 2021). Yet, it is currently unclear how digital transformation shifts the existing innovation ecosystems paradigm from an analogical ecosystem to a digital innovation ecosystem.

For instance, the Slow Food Movement, which started in Italy in the 1980s, over time has built a global ecosystem supporting process innovation in food and drink value chains. While its shift from analog to digital can be easily observed, the mechanism that allowed its digital transformation is unclear: this requires an understanding of the role played by the actors in structuring the ecosystem and their strategic coordination in the innovation ecosystem.

In a digital transformation context, artefacts such as digital platforms are often thought of as being the cause of the innovation (Granstrand & Holgersson, 2020), but in this paper, we explain that innovation is instead enabled by bridging the innovation ecosystems’ architecture and the strategic coordination of activities. Currently, the innovation literature does not fully explain how innovation ecosystems can adapt their architecture and coordinate the activities required to make innovation happen, especially under the assumption of the non-linearity of ecosystems’ dynamics. Therefore, we propose that in an innovation ecosystem, the adaptation of the ecosystem architecture to its strategic coordination happens because of a knowledge brokerage cycle that regulates network access and knowledge transfer (i.e., adoption, integration, and implementation).

In this study, we contribute to the theoretical understanding of innovation ecosystems by presenting a novel framework for innovation ecosystems’ strategic coordination that enables innovation, built on knowledge management cycles.

Keywords: Digital transformation, Food Systems, Slow Food Movement, Innovation, Innovation Ecosystems, Knowledge Management.

References
Digital transformation of public organizations: a study on the economic chamber of Greece

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Abstract:  
The Covid-19 pandemic outbreak turned the digital strategy of several countries into a necessity. Restrictions on travel and transportation underscored the need for digitization of services, which had to be done quickly and efficiently. Thus, the pandemic acted as an accelerator of the strategy for the digital transformation. Within a century, humanity has gone through two more cycles of industrial change, first when computers became powerful and now that digital technologies are merging with the physical lives of humans. Humanity as a whole evolved and prospered during the previous three revolutions. However, during the transition, success and benefits were not equally distributed to all, such as in the public sector where it still needs a lot of effort to be able to keep up with the digital transformation. The digitization of public services is, at the moment, an essential need for many governments around the world. An improved government through digitization will not only have a growing impact on business, but will also be able to increase citizen participation and push for economic growth. Thus, in recent years more countries have gradually started to provide digital services to their citizens. Therefore, in order to address this development, the purpose of this paper is to describe the aspects of digital transformation in the public sector in Greece. For this reason, empirical research was carried out, through which the aim was to analyze the case of the digital transformation of the Economic Chamber of Greece. The study was conducted using an electronic questionnaire and the results showed that the success of the digital transformation depends on organizational, technological and external factors. Finally, the results provide information for future research needs.

Keywords: digital transformation, public sector, digitization
Neuroscientific Perspectives in Digital Marketing

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Abstract

Neuromarketing is an emerging interdisciplinary field combining consumer behavior, neuroscience and economics that can provide in advertising industry new strategies in order to correspond the new market situations in a more effective way than traditional marketing methodology can do. The integration of the Triple Brain in neuroscience, economics, and particularly marketing has played a crucial role, as the model is no longer the neocortex, the most significant section of the brain, and the one who sends instructions. In contrast, the primary function is played by the lower and middle brain, which are responsible for regulating emotions and human reactions, with an immediate impact on the creation of a person's behavior. The marketing effort through advertising (digital or not) must first target the reptilian brain of the consumer, then pass through the limbic brain's emotions and moods, and finally be able to be dealt with and processed by the neocortex, with the ultimate goal of increasing the marketer's likelihood of making a profit while simultaneously gaining the consumer's trust. This paper will present, in the first phase, a technique used on the core website of ZOPA financial institution (zopa.com), and in the second phase, this technique will be analyzed, in the context of neuromarketing, in terms of how it attempts to consolidate these messages from the three brain types (reptilian, limbic, neocortex) of the online visitor-consumer. As a result of the aforementioned strategies, ZOPA Bank's website, which takes advantage of the fundamental concepts of neuromarketing regarding how the threefold consumer brain processes information, is able to attract a growing number of internet visitors/potential consumers. The results indicate, among other things, that the adoption of digital neuromarketing methods in combination with digital marketing techniques is a significant tool for exporting and receiving conclusions in the decision-making process, particularly in the advertising and consumer behavior disciplines.

Keywords: Neuromarketing, Triple Brain, Digital Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Decision-Making, ZOPA

Introduction

Neuromarketing is the study of the application of neuroscience to the marketing industry. It examines the effect on the human brain as well as the inputs it gets in response to advertising or other marketing efforts (Dulabh et al., 2018; Halkiopoulos et al., 2022). Statistics indicate that around 70% of the purchasing decisions we make are not deliberate, but rather the result of environmental stimuli and emotional impulses. Digital Neuromarketing is primarily concerned with how we might influence consumer decisions through digital channels of modern marketing, despite being a relatively unexplored topic (Halkiopoulos et al., 2021). An example of the application of Neuromarketing in an online store aims, through the use of neuromarketing techniques, to increase the rate of conversion of visitors into customers through actions aimed primarily at improving the experience of visitors during their navigation (User Experience), as well as through messages or strategic moves designed to subconsciously influence consumers (Alvino et al., 2020; Blackwood & Muir, 1990). Specializing in this field, and specifically through the integration of the Triple Brain (Figure 1), an object of neuroscience (Boas et al., 2004), and neuroleadership (Gkintoni et al., 2022) in economics and especially in
modern marketing (Halkiopoulos et al., 2020a; Fortunato et al., 2014; Fink et al., 2007), a decisive role now emerges, the primary function of the lower and middle brain, which are responsible for the regulation of emotions and human reactions (Antonopoulou et al., 2022; Gkintoni et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2017), with a direct impact on the creation of the individual's behavior and not so much the neocortex, which is the most important part of the brain in its entirety (Butler, 2009; Halkiopoulos et al., 2020b).

Figure 1: Triple Brain

Methodology

Thus, with the support of Neuroscience, the effort of modern marketing, through advertising (digital or not), is viewed as integral, targeting in the first phase the reptilian brain of the consumer, in the second phase the satisfaction of the emotions and moods of the limbic brain, and, finally, processing and processing by the neocortex, with the ultimate goal of increasing the merchant's likelihood of earning a profit while simultaneously boosting consumer confidence. This study will discuss a strategy utilized on the primary website of the banking organization ZOPA (zopa.com). Then, this technique will be evaluated within the context of neuromarketing in terms of how it strives to integrate these messages from the three types of the online visitor-brain consumer's (reptilian, limbic, neocortex) (Meyerding & Mehlhose, 2020).

Results

First, the website will try to win over the reptilian brain of the consumer, the brain responsible for survival. The first step (first phase) shows the consumer a set of trust indicators, such as images showing the awards the bank has won, to reassure the reptilian brain (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2,3: ZOPA Awards

They then calm the consumer's reptilian brain by showing them the final cost of their loan when they consider all the related fees. They also make him feel safe since they inform him that the interest rate remains fixed and make him feel like a winner since their commission is zero cost. Indeed, to win over the reptilian brain, a good option is to present the apparent benefits of using the product or service, as ZOPA Bank does in the image below (Figure 4).
The reptilian brain also responds very quickly to visual stimulation. This means that compelling visual content is the best tool to influence them. This is clearly presented on the company's website with the use of infographics on almost every subpage.

In the next step, the second phase, after the reptilian brain has already been activated with the above actions of the company, an attempt is made to convey messages to the limbic part of the consumer's brain. People often make decisions based on emotional predictions. This means that they think about the emotional impact that a future event or the outcome of a decision will have on them, and they base their decision on their predicted feelings. Images that promote happy feelings (Figure 5, 6) help consumers to predict the effect (feelings of satisfaction and happiness) the products of the specific company will have on them (ZOPA). Researchers have also suggested, in website design, the use of large, prominent images because these images can help prospective consumers improve the perceived validity of website/business claims to a great extent (Figure 7).

In the third and final phase, the company (ZOPA) adopts a strategy to deal with the neocortex of the consumer in order to achieve its final goal, which is none other than the choice of its services/products.
It is worth noting that all logical processes now take place in the neocortex. For example, we will notice that the interest rate will not affect our credit limit, and the application process will be short and relaxing. Immediate disbursement will occur (using the psychological understanding of the human need for immediate satisfaction, studying the phenomenon through the "Stanford Marshmallow Experiment") without waiting and perfect cooperation, a definitive conclusion due to the award of the particular bank for its customer service. The bank offers the prospective consumer precisely what to expect if he chooses a service or product. The human brain prefers precision.

Figure 8: ZOPA Q/A

One reason may be that we have a natural bias against uncertainty, a phenomenon known as the Ambiguity Effect (identified by Daniel Ellsberg in 1961), which shows people choosing situations where the probability of a particular outcome is known over those where the probability of the outcome is unknown. We also notice that the Company’s website refers directly to the public.

«Manage your card effortlessly. Our simple app makes managing your money easy. See your PIN, download statements, see your spends and much more, all on the go.»

Notably, a research study found that headlines that referred to the public directly got higher click rates than those that were purely informative. We also note that the website follows the conclusions of Asch's compliance experiments. According to Asch, our desire to belong exceeds our desire to stand out. In addition, according to Asch, the need of human, and therefore of the consumer, for conformity and social acceptance is vital. Finally, we observe that the ZOPA Company recognizes and uses it appropriately (Larsen, 1974).

Figure 9: ZOPA Online Review
A visible result, based on the evaluation of the users of the specific Company, is the testimonials of satisfied customers, where a large sample of 17465 people/consumers who rated the satisfaction of the services provided with 4.5 stars (via the valid Trustpilot application) /products of the specific Bank (Figure 9). Also noteworthy are the following two techniques, using fundamental neuromarketing concepts, on this particular bank's main page (Skov, 2010).

Figure 10: ZOPA Ad

1st Technique

Use of a number in the title of the specific indirect advertisement. Headlines using numbers are more popular than any other type of headline. The numbers in the title are robust for conceptualization and categorization, activities performed by the brain. With the help of numbers, we can plan the time we will devote to reading the article; let us not forget that the human brain constantly avoids risks, and the numbers in the title reassure it. Eye-tracking techniques also show that numbers often distract the digital reader's wandering gaze, even when embedded in a sentence, causing users to pay more attention to a sentence they would otherwise ignore.

2nd Technique

Humans have an innate need for coherence in their lives. A basis of the research literature has been examined the phenomenon/feeling of cohesion and how it can be achieved by recognizing common enemies. Suppose we want to apply the specific principle, the phenomenon of coherence, in modern marketing. In that case, there should be texts on the website that will create the image of a common enemy that the company and its potential digital consumer can face together. This principle is implemented through a specific article published on the ZOPA Bank website. The article states the following:

«WE can even pair smart lights with motion sensors, so that they only switch on when someone is in the room. I’ve programmed my lights to only switch on to 30% brightness at night, which not only saves energy, but means 3am trips to the bathroom are not as dazzling as they once were.»

The article writer/business and the article reader/prospective consumer share a common enemy and a common goal: carbon footprint as a common enemy and monetary gain as a common goal. The page of the ZOPA Company exploits the basic principles of neuromarketing regarding the way the triple brain of the consumer processes the information and manages to have a continuous upward trajectory resulting in the acquisition of more and more consumers.

Conclusion

As a result of the strategies mentioned above, ZOPA Bank's website, which exploits the fundamental concepts of neuromarketing about how the brain of the triple consumer processes information, can attract an increasing number of visitors/potential consumers on the Internet. The results show, among other things, that the adoption of neuromarketing methods combined with digital marketing techniques is essential for deriving and drawing conclusions in the decision-making process, especially in advertising and consumer behavior.
References


Educational leadership in the age of digital transformation

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Abstract  
This paper examines the position of the leader in the era of the 4th Industrial Revolution, also known as Industry 4.0, where the power of technology merges the physical world with the digital one. To be a digital leader, one must possess some important characteristics such as intelligence, innovative strategies and adaptability. The Industrial Revolution Industry 4.0 also affected the education sector, resulting in the era of Education 4.0. The quality of teachers depends on their performance required in the industrial age 4.0. This era gives school principals the need to meet the requirements of Education 4.0, with new digital, skills and different leadership styles to be effective leaders and inspire students and teachers, with the aim of transforming the school and integrating it into the new this season. In Greece, the degree of transition to the digital age is not considered satisfactory. The global health crisis, however, has forced the education system and its leadership to face a number of challenges, with the main tool being the digital application of education and school administration. The continuation of the acquired experience and knowledge and the systematization of the training of teachers and executives, in combination with the establishment of a legal and operational framework are considered necessary for the successful transition of schools to the digital age.

Key-words: leadership, digital transition, education, management

Introduction  
The development of technology has led to the era of Industry 4.0 or the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Innovative technologies have now transformed the social, economic, ecological and cultural dimensions and aspects of life rapidly. The same happened in the Education ecosystem, where Education 4.0 was developed in order to meet these new requirements and education to remain relevant and effective in an area of constant change. It is essentially the digital transition of school units, which is required to provide the necessary supplies to students of the future (Kin, & Kareem, 2019). The role of principals is crucial in this transformation of schools. They are called upon to balance external needs with the primary need for school reorganization and transformation, especially in terms of learning and teaching processes, shifting the critical factor of effective leadership from thinking ability to action ability (Kin, & Kareem, 2019). Considering school leadership as an important predictor of successful change and adaptation of schools in the field of Education 4.0, it is necessary to define and develop new skills of school leaders required to guide this educational change.

Over the years, education systems have evolved in response to social, economic and technological innovations, which in turn are influenced by the evolution of the education system itself. The main purpose of education is to empower a person to live a successful life and to contribute the most to him, family, society, nation and humanity. Therefore, education and training are the most effective tools for achieving a successful life. The Fourth Industrial Revolution brought about significant changes in education and the future of jobs. The wave of the 4th Industrial Revolution was so strong that change was inevitable. Thus emerged Education 4.0, where man and technology align to enable new possibilities (Anand, 2020).

Industry 4.0  
Compared to the previous industrial revolutions, the 4th industrial revolution affects almost every industry in the world by developing an automated and intelligent production, leading to processes of full automation and digitization. The reasons that can distinguish the fourth industrial revolution from the others are the speed for the global interconnection, the emergence of new technologies and the systemic impact of the transformation of whole systems (Guzmán, et al., 2020). The consequences of 4IR are far greater than making technology part of everyday life. In fact, the power of technology will merge the physical world with the digital, significantly influencing our lifestyles and values (Kin & Kareem, 2019).
There are four principles of the industrial age 4.0. First, interconnection, that is, the ability of machines, devices, sensors, and humans to connect and communicate with each other through the Internet of Things (IoT) or the Internet of Things (IoP). Second, there is the transparency of information systems, which describes the actions taken and the information stored. Third, technical support, which helps people understand their data in faster and more powerful ways to make the right decisions, while undertaking the most unpleasant or arduous tasks. Fourth, the decentralization of decisions that results from the ability of digital systems to make choices and perform tasks independently of humans (Prestiadi, Gunawan, & Sumarsono, 2020).

- Long-term drivers of change or growth, such as technological and economic development, globalization, and commercialization, dominated the Fourth Industrial Revolution. These changes will redesign our lives, no doubt with subversive changes for the labor market. However, all this does not mean that there will be a shortage of jobs, but that there will be a lack of skills, pushing the education sector to adapt to the new demands for unlimited possibilities and endless opportunities (Scepanović, 2019). Education 4.0 was developed to meet the requirements of Industry 4.0 that is, the transformation of the educational system from a system based on facts and processes, to a system that actively applies knowledge in the real world (Kin & Kareem, 2019).

**Education 4.0 (educational changes and skills)**

The era of education that was affected by the Industrial Revolution Industry 4.0 is called Education 4.0. Education 4.0 is characterized by the use of digital technology in the learning process, a system that is able to make the learning process take place continuously without space and time constraints (Kadiyono et al., 2020).

Education 4.0 examines, on the one hand, the use of advanced technologies (eg advanced visualization techniques that incorporate virtual reality) to facilitate the teaching process and, on the other hand, the methods and laboratories that will familiarize aspiring engineers with these technologies, as they will work in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0) (Demartini & Benussi, 2017). As technology advances, this concept of education is becoming more and more a necessity and international organizations are considering its integration (European Commission, 2017). Education 4.0 is a smart, virtual and digital transition. For teachers, it is useful to be able to better meet the basic needs of students. They will gradually teach students with Education 4.0 and not with lessons, using tools and techniques that facilitate the purpose of individualized learning. Training 4.0 helps teachers advance the task by offering the latest approaches and techniques (Anand, 2020). Uses artificial intelligence methods, including interactive presence for blended learning courses and features based on Artificial Intelligence, such as personalized learning, hands-on learning with AR / VR devices, adaptive learning and e-assessments. Indicatively, Figure 1 follows with technological data and teaching tools of Education 4.0.

![Technology elements and tools of Education 4.0 with teaching objectives (Ciocacu, Tehrani, Beer & Popp, 2017).](image)

Education 4.0 can be considered as a new example that redefines concepts such as learning, student, teacher and school according to the needs of Industry 4.0. One example of innovative teaching and learning practices as part of Education 4.0 is the inverted classroom model. In inverted classrooms, students can explore digital resources related to the lesson, such as videos, presentation material, electronic material outside of school, and can acquire the knowledge they need outside of traditional classrooms (Himmetoglou, Aydug & Bayrak, 2020). Education 4.0 will empower students towards innovation, resulting in increased success levels and greater student learning outcomes. As a result, it creates educated, trained professionals equipped with interdisciplinary thinking, social skills and other technical skills for a highly globalized and technology-oriented world of work (Brown-Martin, 2018). Education is at the heart of preparing present and future generations to thrive in the competitive world.
Leadership 4.0

Leadership is the critical strategic ability of nations, communities and organizations, enabling them to be sustainably capable of the future, fostering a culture of innovation. Changing global conditions in the era of the 4th Industrial Revolution, such as increasing performance requirements, the pressing need for continuous learning, and advanced digital technologies require new approaches to organizational leadership (Lappalainen, 2015). Leadership is therefore in the vortex of a fundamental and radical transformation, with digitization as a central factor, which is considered strong enough to have an impact on current and future leadership practices. Digital leadership (leadership 4.0) is a fast, hierarchical, team and collaborative approach, focused on learning and innovation, focusing on improving knowledge and introverted thinking Digital Leadership Means Industry Leadership 4.0. These leaders 4.0 are called digital leaders. However, not every leader in a technology company is a digital leader. What makes a leader digital is not the industry in which the company works, but its ability to appreciate exactly how new technologies can be used to deliver value, leaving aside the focus on people. In other words, it is a matter of leadership style and the ability of these leaders to inspire their employees to innovate and keep their ideas (Oberer & Erkollar, 2018). The personal competence of the leader, the mentality, as well as the ability to apply new tools is critical dimensions for the leaders 4.0. Undoubtedly, Industry 4.0 requires businesses to think in new ways, following a step-by-step process to find and execute solutions that improve profits, efficiency, and customer satisfaction, and to keep business ahead of the curve of innovation. Consequently, the implementation of leadership 4.0 requires investment and an open mind in changing culture as digitization is not only done through the application of new technologies, but also their proper use. Digitization is leading to a transformation of production, logistics, communication and human resource management. Innovative approaches must create value from digitization, connected smart devices, and introduce new ways of communicating and collaborating (Guzmán et al., 2020).

The most distinctive feature that distinguishes a digital leader from a traditional leader is innovation. Visionary leaders govern with a vision consistent with the overall business strategy of the company, share the vision with the organization and mobilize teams to promote it in an inspired rather than authoritarian style. The innovative visionary knows that innovations are learned and the future is invented and designed, giving employees the freedom to think of the best way to realize the common vision, all with a deep understanding that it takes great discipline and utilization of each individual to see their vision bear fruit (Bawany, 2019).

Another important feature of digital leadership is networking intelligence and digital intelligence. Networking intelligence is the ability of the digital leader to distribute tasks according to the situation and abilities of the team, to work together and create a vision together. On the other hand, digital intelligence is related to the skills of digital technologies and digital culture. The digital leader should have a broad vision of how things can be transformed digitally and feel excited about digitization. In addition, the digital leader must be master of complexity, that is, be able to understand and interpret complex situations and solve conflict problems (Klein, 2020). Therefore, digital leaders should have the ability to develop new business models, with business intelligence and a comprehensive business understanding. This lies in the flexibility of each leader to balance between new and existing business sectors and between the current trends and traditions of the past, which he must maintain during the digital transformation (Bawany, 2019).

As for the social attitude of the digital leader, he must provide incentives to encourage employees to embrace difficulties remove their fears and assess the situation they are in. Employees often fear that digital technology will replace their jobs. And here's how leadership 4.0 can play a big and important role in how Industry 4.0
integrates into a new work life. In addition, the digital leader should have a democratic, employee-oriented leadership style. That is, a flat organization with minimal hierarchies should prevail and assign tasks according to the abilities of each, aiming at the well-being of employees (Mirza, 2017). All of this, however, should be implemented under an open and transparent atmosphere, with advocating diversity for both employees and associates (Oberer&Erkollar, 2018).

Admittedly, leaders around the world are constantly evolving, making adaptability a prerequisite for a good leader. The competent leader should adapt to the constant changes in a flexible way and see the change not as an obstacle, but as an opportunity for new business models and digital transformation strategies. Flexible leaders understand that while an end goal and a vision are necessary, the path that will lead them there must be flexible. For this reason, they plan in advance, having an emergency plan in case a plan does not work. Consequently, the digital leader should be a lifelong learner, knowledge-oriented with a willingness to learn for life (Klein, 2020).

However, all leaders make mistakes. Mistakes are part of a leader's digital life, but the difference between good and great leaders lies in how they handle them. Based on this an important characteristic of the digital leader is determination and bravery. Leader 4.0 should take action with confidence, persuasiveness and perseverance and develop them creatively. In particular, self-aware leaders are actively concerned about how their words and actions are perceived by others and work to change their own weaknesses so that they can lead their colleagues more effectively. Self-awareness leads to personal control and development that helps leaders use their strengths to guide teams to the best possible results (Oberer&Erkollar, 2018).

**School Digital Leadership**

In the field of education, the leadership role changes along with the changing expectations for educational excellence. School principals must meet the needs of Education 4.0 with sufficient skills to be effective leaders who can bring schools to transformational advantage. As effective leadership is a central concern in the school system (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2016), it is important for school principals to be flexible and adapt their leadership practice to meet the needs of students, stakeholders and school systems in era of education 4.0 globally and locally. With the increasing demands for educational excellence, school principals can only become effective leaders if they are able to acquire new knowledge, skills and competencies through effective professional development programs or interventions systematically and continuously (Kin & Kareem 2019).

Educational institutions play a very important role in creating quality national education that tends to become increasingly competitive in modern times. If a school is advanced, then the education of a country as a whole will also be advanced. School leaders, who act as shareholders in the school, also play a key role in this development. Teachers need to upgrade their skills in view of Education 4.0. Students facing teachers today are familiar with the flow of information and industrial technology 4.0, and should definitely be able to meet the challenges of Industry 4.0 after graduation (Kadiyono et al., 2020).

To become a professional leader you need to have various skills, such as: personality, supervision, management, entrepreneurship and social skills (Indonesian Minister of Education, 2007). According to Haris (2013) the leadership style of school leaders is divided into democratic, authoritarian, charismatic, paternalistic, experienced, and free. The various aspects have their respective strengths and weaknesses, but what needs to be taken into account is that the application of the leadership style of leaders must be adapted to the current conditions prevailing in educational institutions. Every leader is expected to have an ideal leadership style adapted to the conditions and requirements of the time. Not all school principals have the ability to adapt to the demands of change, coupled with leaders' lack of knowledge about transforming the leadership of school leaders in the 21st century (Kadiyono et al., 2020).

According to the administration of education, school leaders must become agents of change and must follow the existing changes. However, the rapid development of technology must be balanced with the quality of human resources. Management sees education as a microcosm of society, so to create a quality society it starts with educational institutions. According to the theory of the functional structure of society as a social system that is interconnected, there is a system of education, family, society that work together to achieve balance and harmony (Kadiyono et al., 2020).

The successful development of educational leadership that is suitable both for the professional development activities of the current school principals and for the setting of qualification criteria for the candidate school principals is a prerequisite for the leadership development of the school principals towards the productive change in the era of Education 4.0. For this reason, several studies have been conducted in order to build a conceptual framework for the characteristics of educational leadership. The following are the results of surveys conducted in Indonesia and Malaysia.
According to a study conducted for Indonesia (Kadiyono et al., 2020), the effect of transformational leadership styles, transactional, democratic, authoritative, bureaucratic and charismatic on the performance of primary school teachers was analyzed. The method used in the present study is the quantitative method. Data were collected by distributing electronic questionnaires to 282 Jakarta primary school teachers, whose characteristics are illustrated in Figure 2. A simple random sampling technique was used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt; 30 Years</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; 40 Years</td>
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</tr>
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<td>&lt; 5 Years</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 Years</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 10 Years</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; Master's degree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>94.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Descriptive profile information of the respondent (Kadiyono et al., 2020)

Based on the study of existing theories and previous research, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Case 1 (H1) Transactional leadership styles affect teacher performance
Case 2 (H2) Transformational leadership style affects teacher performance
Case 3 (H3) The Democratic Leadership Style That Affects Teacher Performance
Case 4 (H4) Authoritarian leadership style that affects teacher performance
Case 5 (H5) Bureaucratic leadership style influences teacher performance
Case 6 (H6) Charismatic leadership style that affects teacher performance

These hypotheses are illustrated in Figure 3 where the research model is presented.
The conclusion of this study is that transactional leadership, transformational leadership, democratic leadership style, authoritarian leadership style, bureaucratic leadership style, and charismatic leadership style have a positive and significant effect on teacher performance (Figure 4). The leadership style of school principals has undergone a transformation after the change; the democratic leadership can embrace teachers, students, school boards, student guardians and the community. In the study of the sociology of education, schools must perform their functions properly, so that the leadership of the leaders can be the progress of the guided educational institution. To become a professional school leader you need to have personality, managerial, business, supervisory and social skills. The skills to face the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 are evident from the ability of leaders to use technology and business skills. The efforts made by leaders to improve skills are continuous training, participation in various trainings, seminars, workshops and various support activities. There needs to be cooperation from various parties, especially policy makers, so that school leaders can become professional and quality leaders (Kadiyono et al., 2020).

Another survey on the characteristics of a school leader was conducted in Malaysia. According to research by Tai and Omar (2018c) as reported in (Kin & Kareem 2019), the ability of school leaders is strongly linked to
and influences student performance. Defining the leadership behaviors needed to promote school success today is therefore essential. This situation requires a more careful examination of the skills of school leaders as their ability is significantly linked to student achievement (Tai & Omar, 2018c). To this end, the question is whether Malaysian school principals are sufficiently capable of effectively leading school change and transforming the school system successfully. Although the need for effective school leadership in the age of Education 4.0 is widely recognized, there is much less certainty about which leadership behaviors are most likely to produce favorable outcomes. Indeed, to equip school principals with sufficient skills to effectively drive school change in this age of Education 4.0, we need a credible and valid model for identifying those critical leadership skills that can help school leaders measure school improvement and efficiency (Kin & Kareem 2019).

Although there are various models for school leadership ability, these models are mainly developed in western educational settings. As Malaysia's history, culture and education system are different from those in the West, the lack of a scientifically valid and locally developed model of school leadership for the Education 4.0 era requires a study to identify these critical skills (Kin & Kareem 2019).

Malaysia's education plan 2013-2025 was launched to transform Malaysia's education system to be on par with advanced countries. An important ambition is to have a high quality school principal in every school, because they are the transformational leaders who are expected to lead change effectively (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2016). If school principals do not have the necessary skills and start the process properly, school reform will fall short of ambition. Therefore, the development of school leadership is an urgent priority in order to achieve effective educational leadership that reshapes and transforms. If school leadership is viewed from a competency-based behavioral structure and focuses on the most critical of what can be taught, there is no doubt that school leadership development processes can be precisely tailored to greater effectiveness and enhance leadership ability to meets the needs of Education 4.0 and ultimately transform the school system effectively. (Kin & Kareem 2019).

Many countries have set up nationwide programs to promote the digital transition of schools, such as Malaysia (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025). Having a high quality leadership in every school unit is an important factor because they are the transformational leaders who will successfully bring about change (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2016) as reported in (Kin & Kareem, 2019). Kin and Kareem (2019) provide a basis for identifying critical leadership skills that includes: learning guidance, integrity and responsibility, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity and innovation, decision making, problem solving, change management, business, digital literacy and emotional intelligence. A study conducted examines the ability of school leadership for the time of education 4.0 in relation to the above 12 corresponding indicators. Thus, a proposal was developed that concerns the abilities of the school leader in the era of Education 4.0 (Figure 5).

![Figure 5: The proposed model of school leadership in the era of Education 4.0 (Kin & Kareem, 2019)](image_url)

The central indicator is learning. School principals need to be capable of guiding and influencing teachers, who in turn contribute to the creation of knowledge about teaching and learning (Wendy Pan et al., 2017). Every change involves learning. Coming from a deep personal desire for learning and a commitment to help teachers learn, school leaders are first students and then leaders.

Next are the indicators of the ability of Integrity and Responsibility. School leaders need to maintain ethical leadership in day-to-day management in order to contribute to the ethical education of young people.
Communication refers to the degree to which school leaders are able to effectively communicate their vision and beliefs with direction, words and actions to achieve school goals (Smith & Riley, 2012). Collaboration focuses on the fact that successful schools assume that school improvement and effectiveness is a collective rather than an individual enterprise (Tai & Omar, 2018a). In order for school principals to work together successfully, they must acquire the understanding, skills and experience required. Critical thinking is defined as the ability to show originality and ingenuity in work. Decision making is the ability to choose between alternative courses of action (Smith & Riley, 2012) that creates the right conditions for school effectiveness. School principals have to deal with and resolve conflicting interests as they try to balance a variety of values and expectations in their decision-making. Problem solving is defined as the ability to develop new ideas and solve or turn problems into opportunities (Angeli&Valanides, 2012). All the problems that arise in the school units require the dedication of enough time on the part of the principals, whose performance in solving these problems has a direct impact on the school and the students. Thus, they need the ability of a specialist to use specific procedures to help the school be more efficient and successful. Change management refers to the ability to bring about change, to make others change, and to support continuous change in schools (Tai & Omar, 2018a). School leaders are seen as the people who are responsible for implementing these changes and responsible for their results. Entrepreneurship is defined as the ability to organize and manage the school entrepreneurially with significant initiative and risk to create opportunities for school improvement (Akbar & Obaid, 2014). Managers in this spirit respond to various issues, and to equip them with such skills, progressive and transformative is an urgent need for them to equip themselves with the relevant skills.

In addition, the adequacy of the use of technologies and the ability to promote a school culture that encourages the integration of ICT in teaching, learning and management or Digital Literacy is considered a key competence for educational quality (Purvanova & Bono, 2009). Emotional Intelligence (EM) is a set of skills involved in reasoning about emotions and using emotions to inform cognitive activities such as reasoning and problem solving (Omar & Tai, 2018b). School leaders need to be able to run organizations that address the emotional well-being of staff and students in order to be effective. Through all of these adaptive skills, principals can make both the same effective leaders and the operation of a school successful and efficient. The growing demands for school reforms in the age of Education 4.0 are constantly challenging the roles of school leaders. In response to the demands of this age, school leaders need to be equipped with the skills to respond to changes in the education system effectively. No school principal will accept any change of school if they are not able to perform the new task with satisfaction (Kin & Kareem, 2019).

**Education 4.0 and Digital School Leadership in Greece**

Despite the global nature of education in the digital age, each country has a different degree and pace of adaptation to the digital transition. In Greece, education and school administration seem to be implemented in a traditional way. Panagiotopoulos & Karanikola (2020), in a qualitative survey conducted with a sample of 233 pre-school teachers in Western Greece, found that teachers maintain a cautious attitude towards the implementation of Education 4.0. Although they believe that it brings better learning outcomes, opportunities for personalized learning, facilitate communication and save resources, they are concerned about the increased workload, changes and insecurity that will bring about the teaching profession, as well as the threat to privacy and the sharpening of social inequalities for students. Their attitudes seem to be influenced by their knowledge of new technologies.

A study by Gantri (2020) shows that most teachers have a positive attitude towards ICT and consider the role of principal to be crucial for their integration into the school. They argue that it should take care first of the digital information of the students and their equal access to ICT and then for the upgrade and the technological equipment of the school. Male participants were more positive than women towards ICT, as they are more familiar with their use, while teachers with more years of service have increased needs for technological training.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought significant and abrupt changes in the educational reality of Greece, especially in its first phase, when at the beginning of March 2020 all school units were closed. Adaptation to the new conditions required the integration of digital tools in both the educational process and the administration (eg electronic secretariat). Education officials were called upon to take action so that the imposed social distance did not negatively affect learning (OECD, 2020). Netolicky (2020) reports that social networking platforms have been used to share resources, processes and courses to address the needs of the pandemic. The digital leap of Greek schools during the pandemic has been the subject of numerous researches at all levels of education. Studies on crisis management skills, such as the occurrence of a pandemic, show that the school
leader should have cooperation and adaptability, flexibility and empathy (Maxouris, 2021). Grivopoulou and Karakatsani (2021) in their research on Second Chance Schools (SDE) underlined that the successful digital transition requires the school leader to act to help teachers and students, by creating a positive school climate, cooperation, coordination and networking of all members of the school community using digital tools.

Tatsi (2021) points out the importance of coordinating teachers and students in the implementation of distance education by studying the key role of school leaders in secondary education. It also examines the possibility of remote meeting of the teachers 'association and problems that have arisen, such as ensuring the protection of students' personal data and the lack of material infrastructure of schools.

Tatsiou (2021) presented the special challenges faced by the administrations of multicultural schools in the effort for smooth integration and seamless participation of all students, despite their social, cultural or educational peculiarities, in attending digital lessons. The benefits of using digital tools in the educational process, and in particular such populations, as he rightly argues, can remain even after the pandemic has passed.

The importance of ICT knowledge is recognized by the State, which scores the computer knowledge in the recruitment of educational staff and organizes (mainly by IYTE Diofantos with a partner body the Institute of Educational Policy - I.E.P.) trainings of teachers of all levels in ICT, separating them into AD and B level.

In addition, the certified knowledge of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) AD level is one of the two prerequisites for participation in the process of selecting education executives (article 29), according to the recent Law 4823 / 3- 8-2021 (known as the Law of Kerameos). Also, the selection criteria of the candidate executives include the certification of BD level training in ICT, or the inclusion in the list of B level trainers and the certification of B1 level training in ICT, which are scored with one unit and half a unit respectively (article 31, par. 2, item bz). Also, the knowledge of foreign languages (art. 31, par. 2, par. C) is credited, the Greek and international publications and the creation of educational software (art. 31, par. 2, par. D), as well as the participation in research programs (art. 31, par. 3, item c), such as participation in innovative training programs or actions funded in whole or in part by the European Union (EU) or international organizations such as Lingua, Socrates, Comenius, Erasmus / Erasmus +, Leonardo da Vinci, eTwinning, Model United Nations (M.U.N.), European Youth Parliament (EYP), Euroscola, Youth Parliament or in actions of common interest of a small group of teachers in the context of school self-evaluation in the implementation of actions” (art. 31, par. 3, approx. cd). The selection of the specific criteria shows the intention of the State to promote in education leaders who have the skills of communication, cooperation, development of innovations and effective use of new technologies at all levels of educational and administrative practice.

Conclusions – Suggestions
The Fourth Industrial Revolution, with the speed that characterizes it, has brought its characteristics in every field of human activity. The field of education and consequently of the educational leadership has changed its form, with the integration of digital tools in the daily teaching and administrative practice. The new leadership culture required for the digital transition is based on the digital intelligence and networking intelligence of modern leaders, but also on the development of innovation, business intelligence, flexibility, adaptability and collaboration.

The passion for new technologies and the positive attitude towards digital citizenship, their systematic and effective use that will work exemplary and will motivate teachers in this direction, the facilitation of continuous training in ICT use (Dagdiileis, 2005, Bakos, 2009, Dimakopoulos and Panagiotakopoulos, 2010, as cited in Gantri, 2020) that will play a key role in the attitude that teachers will adopt towards the digital school, the pursuit of equal access of all students to ICT composes the behavior of modern leader. Necessary actions for the safe and correct use of digital tools are the definition of legal and ethical policies by the state, the information of students and teachers with responsibility for the safe use of the internet, the protection of privacy and the prevention of plagiarism.

The integration of digital tools in teaching and learning will contribute to the digital creation of literate citizens, students and teachers. However, measures should be taken to address the difficulty of access to technological means by providing financial support from the State (Grivopoulou and Karakatsani, 2021). This presupposes the existence of digital leaders in the administration of the Ministry of Education (Gantri, 2020) who will inspire all the existing ones and will take care of the material and technical equipment of all Greek schools.

The value of digitizing education and its management in crisis management has been demonstrated through the manifestation of the global coronavirus health crisis. The fear of teachers, students and their parents about the use of digital media in education has been significantly reduced due to the sudden start of modern mainly distance education during the pandemic. In this light, the health crisis should be seen as an opportunity and there should be a continuation in its utilization so that the benefits it has brought are not lost. In this context, it is deemed necessary to reshape the duties of the Headmaster of the school unit with the necessary responsibilities for the administration and organization of distance education.

Achieving a successful digital transition for schools requires the coordination of a series of actions. Initially, the skills of modern educational leadership should be identified, based on which training programs for school
principals will be designed to enhance their capacity to meet the needs and challenges of Education 4.0 (Kin & Kareem, 2019). The age and gender of school principals, the subject of their studies and training are factors for the satisfactory use of ICT and therefore their integration into the educational routine. Therefore, the programs that will be created should be targeted to the needs that will be identified through the systematic investigation of their educational needs. Finally, the creation of learning communities for teachers and educators, worldwide, with the aim of exchanging good practices and familiarizing themselves with the connection and active participation in groups of common interest would contribute to the professional development of executives and the necessary cultivation of its culture modern digital leader.

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Leadership Style Model for Indonesian Teachers Performance in Education 4.0 Era. *Sys Rev Pharm 2020, A multifaceted review journal in the field of pharmacy*, 11(9), 363-373.


Drivers of Mobile Technology Adoption in Cuba and Ghana

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Abstract
Technologies and digital possessions that have become staples in developed countries are still status symbols in many developing countries. Yet very few studies have tried to understand the values and assumptions embedded in mobile technologies and the roles of these digital possessions in people’s lives. Furthermore, what these technologies represent to users in developing countries and how they are disrupting inhabitants’ communications, their social ties, work practices, or even their own identity is still not yet fully understood. There is a clear need to investigate why consumers in countries with limited infrastructure, and consequently inadequate Internet access adopt mobile technologies that require these amenities to perform even some of their basic functions. Relying on the theory of the Extended Self (Belk 1988) and the Extended Self in the digital world (Belk, 2013), we develop a research model with nine hypotheses that was tested in two developing countries, namely Cuba and Ghana. We collected data from 430 inhabitants in Ghana and 537 in Cuba. The data from Ghana had strong reliability scores, unfortunately the reliability scores for the data collected in Cuba were much lower. Cuba unlike Ghana is communist, with strong restrictions on who is authorized to conduct any form of research and how the investigation is conducted. The frightening legal issues we found ourselves in during the data collection in Cuba, coupled with the disappointing validity scores of the data collected in this country, warranted the need to extend our work to include a discussion of the perils of academic research.

Keywords  
Mobile technologies, extended self, digital possessions, identity and Cuba
Digital Marketing & The social media during the Pandemic Period: An empirical research

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic control measures have created exceptional and special conditions in economic, social and personal lives. The measures caused many difficulties and changes both in business performance and consumers’ behaviour. Enterprises have adopted and used the capabilities of information technology and related strategies in order to ensure viability. Consumers have also used information technology and social media services. To investigate the relationship between Digital Marketing and the social media, a convenience sampling research was organized. The purpose of the research was to discuss consumers’ attitudes towards online and offline markets, the degree of influence of social media advertisements and offline advertising as well as the changes in consumer shopping habits during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research employed a properly structured Google-form questionnaire, which was distributed through the social media (Facebook, Instagram, E-mails, etc.). The survey was conducted from December 23, 2021, until January 13, 2022. In total, 300 completed questionnaires were collected. The research findings demonstrate that, due to Covid-19, an increasing number of consumers have been connecting to the Internet. The frequency of their daily connection to the Internet and the social media has been higher and the number of consumers with Internet and social media accounts has gradually increased. The pandemic brought about changes to the hitherto existing data in online markets. Several companies have a strong presence on the Internet by creating or improving their existing websites in order to retain and attract new customers. As physical stores were closed due to the restrictive measures, consumers turned to online shopping to meet their needs, and, thus, became more familiar with using the Internet. There has also been a marked increase in online shopping. Consumers tend to continue making online purchases rather than visit physical stores although the restrictive Covid-19 measures have been eased. Compared to online marketing, offline marketing is declining, whereas online marketing continues to grow, improve its existing tools, and create new ones. Breaking away from the “traditional” context of Internet applications (SEO, SEM, PPC, email marketing), digital marketing has invaded other online platforms, i.e., the social media (SMM, influencer marketing, content marketing). Nowadays, as advertising has been very successfully integrated in the social media, a large number of consumers are influenced and eventually make their purchases through them. Emphasizing the benefits offered by online shopping (variety, quality, delivery time, sales and after-sales service), consumers often follow famous Brand webpages to be informed about current discounts or new products, or to subscribe for ‘win-a-prize’ competitions. In addition, companies promote products and services through their accounts or by using influencers. On the other hand, offline marketing and the methods it applies has remained unchanged. Empirical research has demonstrated that, for their purchases, most consumers are not influenced by offline marketing media which promote products or services. Even television, which is considered the most popular advertising medium, is impossible to change consumers' shopping habits, despite using famous and popular people in commercials. In conclusion, digital marketing has been integrated into everyone's daily lives and, in combination with the social media, has now been more powerful, by increasingly influencing users. By comparison, traditional marketing methods have begun to decline after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Marketing, Digital Marketing, Online marketing, Offline marketing, social media
1. Introduction
In recent years, the social media have had a great and growing impact on people and, more specifically, consumers. They can now affect most age groups as far as behavior, psychology and shopping habits are concerned. Most social media users are addicted to using the social media, as they tend to associate their lives with them and be identified with situations posted on the social media. In addition to people’s emotions, the social media can also affect habits. Product use and promotion by famous social media users are among the most common contemporary advertising methods to motivate consumers to focus attention to the product and make a purchase.

In addition, before making purchases, users tend to make product research for items they are interested in, which are posted on the most popular social media. They usually search for photos, videos, comments and any available information about specific desirable products. By using the social media for making decisions on searched products, they have the opportunity to choose among various products and finally buy one at the best price.

Social media influencers are people who shape standards of beauty and style. They promote specific standards in specific categories, which most consumers follow and make purchase decisions accordingly.
In recent years, the outbreak of Covid-19 has changed everyday life, as consumers had no longer access to physical stores. Businesses had to apply alternative purchase methods to attract customers and satisfy purchasing needs without a visit to a physical store.

The Internet and the social media have offered a solution to the specific problem, especially to companies with no ‘online stores’. The pandemic and the consequent restrictive measures forced a large number of entrepreneurs to set up e-shops and promote their products through the social media. Business suspension during the pandemic increased the use of online activities and urged both consumers to spend plenty of time shopping through the social media and enterprises to adapt quickly to the new circumstances. With the help of information technologies, enterprises have tried to achieve their goals, maintain relationships with customers and ensure their viability.

2. Empirical research
To investigate the relationship between Digital Marketing and the social media, a convenience sampling research was organized. Due to the emergency measures taken and the special conditions created by the Coronavirus pandemic, the specific research method was the most suitable for data collection. The research aimed to explore consumer attitudes towards online and offline markets, the degree of impact of social media advertisements and offline market advertising on consumers as well as the changes in consumer shopping habits during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The research employed a properly structured questionnaire with closed-ended, dichotomous, multiple-choice, rating scale and ranking questions. The questionnaire, which was answered via Google forms on the social media (Facebook, Instagram, E-mails, etc.) includes 21 questions structured in 4 sections. The first section discusses consumer attitudes towards online shopping, whereas the second section consumer attitudes towards offline markets. The third section explores changes in consumers’ shopping habits during the Covid-19 pandemic, and finally, the last section lists demographic characteristics. The survey was conducted from December 23, 2021, until January 13, 2022. In total, the corpus of data includes 300 completed questionnaires.

3. Research findings
After collection of the completed questionnaires via Google Forms, and using Excel to analyze the collected answers, the research demonstrated the following major points:

- The vast majority (97.3%) of the survey participants have a personal Internet connection, and 56.3% use the Internet on a daily basis; only 2% use the Internet once a week. The number of consumers who have made no or one online purchase account for 10%, whereas those who have made a few or many online purchases for 92.6%.
- The surveyed consumers-participants are moderately satisfied with online shopping. More specifically, 25% of the surveyed subjects are satisfied with price, product quality, delivery time, sales service (e.g., details, contact with the e-shop), after-sales service and method of payment. They were also very satisfied with the variety of products on the Internet (31.14%). As demonstrated in the table below (Table 1), overall, they are very satisfied and extremely satisfied.
Table 1: Degree of satisfaction with online shopping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Delivery time</th>
<th>Sales service</th>
<th>After-sales service</th>
<th>Method of payment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td>31.14%</td>
<td>13.45%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>30.45%</td>
<td>26.48%</td>
<td>24.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely</td>
<td>9.27%</td>
<td>21.70%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>5.86%</td>
<td>8.65%</td>
<td>10.10%</td>
<td>13.89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the social media, the participants stated that they prefer Instagram (80.3%), Facebook (79.3%) and Youtube (70.7%), whereas their preferences for Twitter, Tik Tok and Pinterest are lower. Remarkably, 3% of the subjects do not have a social media account. The daily time the surveyed subjects spend on the social media varies. More specifically, a number of subjects (35.7%) stated that they spend 5-8 hours a day on the social media, in contrast to a very small percentage (2.3%) who do not spend any time at all. Consumers tend to frequently (43%) and rarely (42.3%) follow the companies (Brands) they are interested in on the social media, whereas a small number of consumers (14.7%) are not interested in following them.

Most participants follow specific company webpages mainly for finding information about current offers (15.3%), winning gifts (13.5%), discounts (13.5%), because they find it interesting (12.10%) and because they get answers to their questions and queries about products/services (10.90%). They are also satisfied with exchanging information about the products or services they are interested in (8.70%) and writing relevant comments (7.50%).

As regards influencers, the respondents’ answers demonstrate that influencers have a strong impact on consumers’ purchases (61%).

Overall, consumers are influenced by social media advertisements to a considerable extent. Purchase possibility for products advertised on the social media is shown in the table below (Table 2).

Table 2: Impact of social media advertising on purchases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of impact</th>
<th>Possibility of purchase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>12.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>43.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of traditional marketing influence, it appears that consumers are less often influenced by traditional marketing advertising methods, such as radio offers, TV offers / discounts, billboards or posters, mobile phone messages (SMS), print advertising (newspapers, magazines, etc.) and brochures. Similarly, a large percentage of over 50% is not affected at all by night telemarketing programs. The following tables show detailed information about the degree of impact of traditional marketing tools on consumer attitudes.

Table 3: The degree of impact of traditional marketing tools on consumer attitudes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Radio offers</th>
<th>TV offers</th>
<th>Night programs</th>
<th>telemarketing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not influenced</td>
<td>40.33%</td>
<td>21.00%</td>
<td>52.67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less frequently</td>
<td>43.33%</td>
<td>47.00%</td>
<td>30.33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>28.33%</td>
<td>14.33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very frequently</td>
<td>1.33%</td>
<td>3.67%</td>
<td>2.67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: The degree of impact of traditional marketing tools on consumer attitudes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Billboards or posters</th>
<th>Mobile phone messages (SMS)</th>
<th>Print advertising (newspapers, magazines, etc.)</th>
<th>Brochures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not influenced</td>
<td>37.00%</td>
<td>41.33%</td>
<td>33.00%</td>
<td>29.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less frequently influenced</td>
<td>42.33%</td>
<td>42.67%</td>
<td>44.00%</td>
<td>44.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently influenced</td>
<td>17.67%</td>
<td>13.67%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>23.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very frequently influenced</td>
<td>3.00%</td>
<td>2.33%</td>
<td>3.00%</td>
<td>3.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, 33.3% of the participants believe that are influenced by TV commercials, in which products/services are promoted by well-known/famous people (actors, singers, athletes), and make purchases more easily, in contrast to those who state they are not influenced (46.3%) or are likely to be influenced (20.3%).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, a large number of consumers increased the number of their online purchases (76.7%), which was rather anticipated, as enterprises and consumers were not allowed to use physical stores, due to the restrictive measures against the pandemic spread. On the contrary, a very small number of consumers (23.3%) did not increase the number of online purchases.

According to the results, 66.3% of the subjects answered that during the pandemic they bought products promoted via social media advertising, whereas 33.7% did not make such purchases. Despite reopening of physical stores, the surveyed consumers, affected by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and familiar with online stores, continued to shop online (73.3%), whereas a small number (26.7%) continued shopping in physical stores.

As regards the profile of the consumers participating in the survey, the majority of the sample is comprised of female subjects (60.3%) whereas the number of male subjects is smaller (39.7%). The sample includes age groups ranging from 18 to 65 years. The dominant age group is the 18 – 29 age group, accounting for 57.3% of the sample, followed by the age groups of 30 – 41 (21.7%), 42 – 54 (13.3%), and 55 + (6.3%). Regarding their professional status, the largest number of the subjects are students (38.3%), whereas very few are pensioners (3%). In terms of education, most participants are university students (40.7%), followed by Higher Education (University and TEI) and Vocational Education graduates (33.7%); other categories include a smaller number of participants (less than 20%).

4. Conclusions

Although traditional Marketing methods and strategies have been still applied, they have been recently replaced to a great extent by Digital marketing, in compliance with the constant changes in consumers’ needs and habits as well as contemporary rapid technological advances. Thus, several enterprises, realizing its benefits, have employed Digital marketing for product or service promotion, by creating various relevant strategies. According to the present research results, offline marketing has been declining in comparison with online marketing. As most people have a personal Internet connection, access to the Internet and Internet tools and applications has become easier. The results demonstrated that there has been a gradual increase in the daily use of the Internet, mostly the social media, which nowadays are dominant, given that a large number of consumers have personal accounts. Over time, online marketing has been thriving, improved its current tools and created new ones. Breaking away from the "traditional" context of Internet applications (SEO, SEM, PPC, email marketing), digital marketing has invaded other online platforms, i.e., the social media (SMM, influencer marketing, content marketing).

In recent years, advertising has been very successfully integrated in the social media influencing a large number of consumers, who eventually make their purchases through them. Remarkably, consumers emphasize the benefits offered by online shopping (variety, quality, delivery time, pre- and after-sales service), often following the pages of the Brands they are interested in, finding information about current discount products, or subscribing for win-a-prize competitions. In addition, enterprises promote products and services using the social media or influencers (people who influence public opinion). Accordingly, consumers are greatly influenced for their purchases by familiar people they trust for product promotion.

On the other hand, offline marketing and the methods it uses have remained unchanged. The empirical research has demonstrated that, to make a purchase, most consumers are not affected by offline marketing media which promote products or services. Even television, which is considered the most popular advertising medium, is impossible to change consumer shopping habits, despite using famous and very popular people in commercials.
The pandemic brought about changes to the hitherto existing data in online markets. Several companies have made a strong presence on the Internet by creating or improving their existing websites in order to retain and attract new customers. As physical stores were forced to close due to the restrictive measures, consumers turned to online shopping to meet their needs, and have, thus, become more familiar with the Internet. As demonstrated even after the survey period, online shopping was obviously increased during the pandemic. Consumers tend to continue making online purchases rather than visit physical stores although the restrictive Covid-19 measures have been eased.

In conclusion, digital marketing has been integrated into everyone’s daily lives and, in combination with the social media, has now been more powerful by increasingly influencing users. By comparison, traditional marketing methods have begun to decline after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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The Management of Big Data in Online Marketing: Challenges and Opportunities. A Theoretical Review

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Abstract
The growing volume, complexity and diversity of data available on the internet that can be used in marketing is a real challenge. In this work, the main goal is to determine the degree of opportunities, challenges and research questions that arise with the emergence of Big Data. It also concludes that Big Data processing enables the marketing sector to gain new opportunities, integrate new metrics related to potential customers and finally redefine market opportunities based on open business models. In addition, the challenges and opportunities created by big data in the field of online marketing are examined, as well as how companies can make the ideal management of big data technology for the best results.

Keywords: Big Data, Knowledge Management, Marketing Capabilities, Customer Relationship, Online Marketing

Introduction
The increase in the quantity, complexity, and number of data sources available to companies represents a real challenge for marketing decisions. The volume of data sent has increased exponentially in recent years, due to the development of the Internet, social networks, e-customer relations, and e-commerce, which have made this submission of information available (Sagiroglu et al., 2013). The term Big Data, defined as a large and complex data set of differentiated, structured and unstructured, difficult approaches and tools, classical data management and analysis acquires its full meaning here. Some even talk about a "big data revolution" (Davenport et al., 2012). This phenomenon seems to be more than a fad, but a fundamental trend that should be taken seriously by businesses. Indeed, according to an international survey conducted in 2016-2017 on 1,217 companies with revenues of over $1 billion, half had a Big Data strategy in 2016, 7% had invested at least $500 million and 15% had at least $100 million. This presence of Data offers great opportunities in the field of marketing, especially in predicting their behaviors and environment (Erevelles et al., 2016).

The purpose of this research is to determine to what extent Big Data brings new issues and to what extent these changes can be perceived with the current conceptual framework. Also, what are the new research questions related to the Big Data issue?

More specifically, we are dealing with the problem of data processing. Marketing is becoming increasingly difficult to manage larger volumes of data, more complex, more diverse, and requires new specific skills for assimilation. In addition, the ability to dynamically understand data offers opportunities for near-real-time analysis and action but also poses the problem of human and organizational skills necessary for this reactivity (Agrawal et al., 2011).
Chapter 1 - Exploitation of Data in the Big Data Context

In marketing, the systematic analysis of large amounts of data is not a new practice, especially with the use of data panels, which appeared in 1930, with the creation of AC Nielsen in the United States. The term intelligence has been used by artificial intelligence researchers since the 1950s. The term "intelligence" became popular in business in the 1990s and, in the late 2000s, the term "business analytics" was introduced to represent the basic component of business intelligence (George et al., 2014). In traditional databases (in CRM, for example), data is mostly structured and easily stored for future use due to its relatively low volume. Given the large amount of information and especially the speed at which data is currently being generated, research is focused on the new capabilities required for big data processing.

Data Processing and Information Restitution

Traditionally, structured data from internal sources are stored in a database by each company before being analyzed and then returned in the form of reports or descriptive checklists made up of internal and structured data, but also external data, often unstructured (for example, data from social networks). Added to this is their continuous flow and high volume as well as their heterogeneity, which implies that they have to be stored on specific servers, especially in the Hadoop framework, and processed by parallel servers such as, for example, MapReduce (Xu et al., 2016). The difference with the processing of "classical" data does not only lie in the technical tools to be used, but also in the possibility of selecting useful data and processing them appropriately, using prediction, sentiment analysis, or anomaly detection algorithms. Also, thanks to real-time data analysis we can analyze the acquisition of reactivity. Thus, data will no longer be perceived as a static mine to be "drilled" (in the classical "data mining" perspective), but as a continuous flow (streaming). This is particularly true for the management of data generated by the Internet of Things and social networks, one of the specificities of which is their speed.

Challenges, Opportunities and Research Questions

The capability to convert this data into usable knowledge to perform customized actions in online marketing is a real challenge. However, in online marketing the management is quite difficult due to the volume and variety of the increasingly available data, also another reason for the increasing difficulty of management is the lack of appropriate skills that are lacking (Anshari et al., 2019). The gap between the potential of online marketing and the complexity of the market is constantly widening. The challenge will therefore be to acquire not only technical skills but above all organizational skills. Beyond the marketing function in the narrow sense, it is the organization in the broad sense that is subject to the challenge of redefinition, which requires close cooperation between the various divisions, particularly between the marketing and outsourced commercial function, removing the inflexible boundaries of a company (Chen et al., 2013; Halkiopoulos et al., 2022). The sharing of information inside the enterprise, as well as the acquisition of fresh competencies outside the marketing function, brings up the question of marketing's position within the enterprise, in the presence of this context that is failing it and the data that it can no longer be managed. However, recent analyses of marketing skills do not integrate the problem of massive data and its organizational implications. In fact, what are the particular skills for utilizing big data? On a more discrete level, what are the new skills that marketing practitioners will need to continue understanding their market, and their customers, and developing appropriate propositions? In order for the marketing function to preserve a key position in the company's strategy, it will have to develop skills that facilitate exchanges with other parts of the company, particularly with the DPO, and be able to continue to launch new ideas by integrating the opportunities offered by new analytical methods. Thus, marketing has to develop the technical and analytical skills that will allow it to seize the opportunities offered by the big data. The perception of data as a flow, rather than in a static way, allows the analysis of market patterns and developments in almost real time. In the area of retail sector, for example, analyzing in-store buying behavior in real-time can let them adjust stock levels, prices, offerings and maximize sales (Davenport et al., 2013). This way of processing data means that the business has the capability to manage knowledge and act rapidly. Nevertheless, among the studies that deal with knowledge management, only some take into account the company's responsiveness and include a time variable, which is necessary to comprehend the analysis and the resulting actions in real-time (Halkiopoulos et al., 2020b). In fact, how does responsiveness is essential to the business - a recurring topic in the information systems literature that is translated into marketing?
Chapter 2 - Knowledge and Management of the Customer Relationship

The customer relationship emerged in the 1990s, especially with market orientations, a set of convictions within the company that has the best interests of the customer in mind. The customer relationship is at the core of current marketing issues (McAfee et al., 2012). Companies seeking to establish and develop a relationship with their most engaged customers in order to preserve (i.e., retain and stimulate) them and enhance their profitability. For optimum customer satisfaction, good customer knowledge is crucial (Halkiopoulos et al., 2020a). To accomplish this, businesses have at their disposal metrics from traditional data sources such as panels, ad hoc surveys, or even transactional and relational systems that permit the management of their customer relationships. What about the increasing complexity of data, as well as from the multiplication of contact points?

Multiplication of Customer Indicators

The customer is becoming increasingly complex and segmented, which compounds the difficulty of getting to know and comprehend their behaviour through traditional methods. The number of touchpoints is rising, due to the multiplication of choices available to the customer, either to search for information or to conduct a transaction, thus raising the number of indicators available for marketing: click-through rate, conversion rate, engagement rate, recommendation, etc. (Strauss et al., 2014).

Challenges, Opportunities and Research Questions

The volume and variety of information available offer major opportunities in terms of customer relationship and knowledge for businesses that will be able to determine the appropriate indicators for understanding consumer behaviour and measuring the performance of marketing initiatives. Channel-specific indicators for each channel rapidly present limitations because they do not allow the effectiveness of marketing actions to be taken into account in the customer journey as a whole (such as the click-through rate for screen-based communication or the conversion rate for a commercial website) (Dritsas et al., 2019). So, what are the indicators that make it possible to understand the increasingly fragmented customer journeys and therefore guide investment across these journeys? To prevent being swamped by this great mass of data, businesses must select the most appropriate indicators in line with their strategy, instead of diving straight into the available data (Sagiroglu et al., 2013). So the challenge of big data will be to select the appropriate indicators to make the right decisions without necessarily integrating a large amount of data. Bulk data processing is not an end in itself, but a means of aligning decisions with customer behavior and managing investments.

Chapter 3 - Identification of Opportunities, Innovation and Business Models

The detection of market opportunities is affected by knowledge of its environment and consequently through access to information. It is not recognizable by everyone, but it depends on the information that has been generated and, as such, partly on the data that is accessible by the business (Hofacker et al., 2016).

Big Data, Innovation and Open Business Models

The big data revolution enables businesses to gain access to a lot of data about their customers and their environment. Some public data that are available to everyone, without legal restrictions (open data), or the use of sensors, have made it possible for industrial companies to gain information on the usage of their products. (Sakr et al 2014) This is the case, for example, of General Electric, which provides engines connected to aircraft, which sends Data to their engineers, who can determine when maintenance is required. GE uses this Data to both innovate and develop new solutions for its customers, helping the airlines that purchase GE's reactors to monitor their performance and forecast maintenance needs. The open business model is emerging, allowing the company to integrate its customers' resources and skills into its value propositions (Kanavos et al., 2019).

Challenges, Opportunities and Research Questions
These challenges in terms of the access to data provide an opportunity for some companies to innovate, providing customers or prospects with new benefits (which may be in the form of services or solutions) and value. (Antonopoulou et al., 2022) Companies are experiencing difficulties in embracing, negotiating, and leveraging the complexity of their environment. How can companies implement a reconstruction of their environment to deal with rapid changes in the market? Is the concept of market orientation, which arose as markets evolved at a slower pace, sufficient to handle Recent research rather than promote the idea of orientation interaction). However, how does this concept relate to the more classical literature on market orientation and marketing skills? We need to move beyond the linear view and the simplified version of behaviours associated with market orientation, which does not take into account either the nature of the data that is now accessible to firms or the current complexity of markets. This would involve identifying the skills and resources that firms need to acquire, both on their own and through exchanges with the outside world (customers, suppliers, etc.) to develop the skills needed to understand their environment (Anshari et al., 2019).

Conclusion

By identifying the changes led to by the phenomenon of Big Data, we've attempted to focus on the bounds of current conceptual frameworks to grasp this new phenomenon and to propose some possible lines of research: the place of promoting within the face of those data that escape him which he can now not manage skills development individual and organizational to take advantage of such Data; the concept of your time within the use of this information by the corporate (concept of agility in marketing); the selection of recent indicators to know increasingly complex customer journeys and manage relevant marketing investments; the event by companies of a representation of their environment supported this data ethically, the challenging the notion of consent. Our conviction is that the phenomenon of Big Data is probably going to renew several current research issues. Through this communication, we, therefore, wish to encourage researchers to conduct inquiry from a perspective that mixes marketing, management of data systems, and strategic management (particularly on the difficulty of organizational and individual skills, insofar as where Big Data potentially calls into question the place and role of marketing).

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Abstract:  
This study aims to investigate the key organizational factors that impact on digital transformation of the public sector during the current pandemic, where many changes were implemented in the ways that organizations operate and offer their services to citizens. The researchers used a mixed research method both quantitative and qualitative. A total of 251 questionnaires were answered by middle managers of the Greek public administration, while a supplementary qualitative research was also conducted through 30 structured interviews with public servants, regarding the digital transformation and the internal factors that hinder its successful integration to the organizations. The results showed that factors such as employees’ training and the development of their digital skills as so as organizational strategy and leadership and the intense lack of a digital culture had a great impact on the adoption and the successful integration of digital governance in the Greek public sector. Finally, it was found that public servants consider the current pandemic as an opportunity for radical changes and improvements in the provision of their services to citizens and in the day to day organizational processes.

Keywords: Digitalization, Internal Factors, Digital Transformation, Public Sector, Pandemic Crisis.

Introduction

Implementing organizational changes seems a difficult process as many reforms in the Greek public administration continue to show high failure rates, mainly due to the poor preparation of the administrative mechanism and the previous problems in the planning and provision of public services (Lapuente & Van de Walle, 2020; Spanou 2018, 2021). Digital transformation as a vital part of the public sector’s reforms brings new ways of working and new forms of relationships (European Commission, 2019). However, there is little empirical evidence on how public administration currently implements digital transformation in their day-to-day practices and on the factors that mainly impact the effective integration of digital transformation within the organizations (Eggers & Bellman, 2015; Danailova, 2014; Xanthopoulou & Karampelas, 2020; Cinar et al., 2019; Febiri & Hub, 2021; Erebak & Turgut, 2021). Digital technologies alone provide little value to an organization (Kane et al., 2015). The success of digital governance systems also depends significantly on how citizens perceive the value achieved by using these new digitalized services especially during the current pandemic where they had the ability to use a variety of them (Scott et al., 2016; Holzer & Manoharan, 2009; Malodia et al., 2021). However, despite the need for a successful digital transformation in the public sector, we still know relatively little about whether and how the adoption of digital technologies is associated with real reforms of the entire public sector organizations (Xanthopoulou & Plimakis, 2021). Therefore, there is a need for a further focus on the factors and characteristics of a successful reform program in the public sector. It is also observed that the majority of the empirical research regarding the digital transformation of the public administration was mainly qualitative using case studies, which cannot lead to the generalization of results, thus it would be useful to conduct quantitative research methods for more generalizable results and conclusions. Consequently, there is also a significant lack of mixed research methods especially from the employees’ point of view. The originality and contribution of the current research lies in two points. Firstly, it used a mixed research method both qualitative and quantitative and secondly, it focuses on how public administration currently...
introduces digital transformation in their day-to-day practices, when the majority of studies focus on technological issues when referring to the digital transformation of public sector.

From the above, we can conclude to the following research questions:

- RQ1: Which factors impact the digital transformation of Greek public administration during the current pandemic?
- RQ2: What are the considerations of public servants concerning the success of digital transformation in the Greek public sector?

Digitalization as a reform: what determines its success?

Digital transformation becomes more pressing than ever, especially under the conditions of the current pandemic in the majority of sectors such as education, health, and in government services which become more dependent on digital technologies nowadays (Soto-Acosta, 2020). The use of technology in the public sector requires organizational changes and the realization that productivity, quality and effectiveness presuppose fundamental exploitation of opportunities through a transition to a fully digital environment (Milakovich, 2021). The transformation of leadership since the development of interpersonal, entrepreneurial and management skills are main characteristics of successful reforms (Lewis, 2017; Morakanyane et al., 2017). A variety of studies have attempted to analyze the factors that inhibit digital transformation from many perspectives. Some of them focus on the internal organizational environment, others on stakeholders and those involved in digitalization projects and others on external factors (such as political, legal and economic), while many of them follow a combined way of thinking. The findings of Effah & Nuhu (2017) for example, revealed that outdated laws and organizational culture focused on rules are significant institutional barriers to digitalization. Other barriers are related to the equipment and mainly to the insufficient and unreliable internet access for all participating organizations. Despite the benefits of digitalization, its development in the public administration still remains a challenge (Falk et al., 2017; Cişmăriașu & Şomîtcă, 2022). The organizational culture and structure can also be barriers to digital innovation especially in the public sector (Lokuge et al., 2019). For example, controlling and strict organizational cultures stifle novel thinking and creativity and limit innovation stimuli perception (Bilal et al., 2018). This happens because the strict adherence to the prevailing norms can generate individual views and ideas strikingly similar, since both the information perception and the interpretation processes have been influenced in a specific direction. Other issues arising included the resistance to innovation and the risk-averse culture (Cinar, et al., 2019; Wipulanusut et al., 2019). The lack of exchanging information and knowledge management within departments and organizations also poses challenges to digitalization (Ruiz-Alba et al., 2019). Resistance by public employees for fear of job loss also limits digitalization in the public sector (Falk et al., 2017; Basyal & Wan, 2020). Literature often distinguishes barriers between internal and external ones, which are subdivided (Lorentz et al., 2021). Specifically, internal barriers include challenges related to resource management systems, time management, organizational culture and leadership as well as challenges related to the human factor. External barriers refer to supply and demand and to external environment factors. In addition, there are numerous empirical studies concerning the barriers in the adoption of e-government, referring to the lack of trust and confidence (Gilbert et al., 2004; Vooglaid & Randma-Liiv, 2022; Mishra et al., 2021; Cahlíkova, 2021), to general concerns about public safety, privacy and data protection (Freire & Casarin, 2021; AlAbdali et al., 2021), to the quality of information (Gilbert et al., 2004; Zeebacre et al., 2021; Sherzod, 2022), to the lack of a supportive leadership and management within the organization (Al-Thayneh et al., 2019; Hai et al., 2021), and to other organizational issues. Other studies, for example the meta-analysis of Savoldelli et al. (2014) identified three groups of barriers to the adoption of e-government such as technological and economic, managerial and organizational, and institutional and political.

Covid19 and Digital Transformation of public sector

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 crisis has accelerated the digital transition in a variety of areas. Today 58% of European Union citizens choose to contact the public administration via the internet and the total internet availability of public services is estimated to be 82%. Digital transformation has emerged as a condition in the last decade, with the aim of redesigning public and private sector services in order to improve the daily work of employees and civil servants, and to effectively meet citizens’ needs for quality and transparency in services (Karamalis & Vasilopoulos, 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic crisis has caused many problems in public sector organizations worldwide. Greece had to take significant and rapid steps towards the digitalization both to protect citizens from the pandemic consequences and to provide services more efficiently and in a timely manner. Although there are many studies that discuss the potential in the private sector only a few studies examine the dynamics and innovation in the public sector (Teее, 2017; Helfat & Martin, 2015; Xanthopoulos & Kefis, 2019). The OECD in the 2021 edition of the Digital Economy and Society in its latest report states that Greece ranks 25th of 27 EU Member States. The country continues to improve its performance in almost all DESI dimensions, although in most cases it still scores below the EU average. Greece has demonstrated a great commitment to digitalizing its government services. The most difficult problem is to
simplify processes and reduce administrative burdens on people, businesses, and government agencies. The rapid adoption of digital services, on the other hand, is projected to boost competitiveness, productivity, investment, and citizen participation (Kovacs & Bittner, 2022). Covid-19 has seriously affected many countries due to the different levels of preparation and due to the ability of the public sector to manage the economic activity. Countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, in particular, have recognized how fragile their production and public health systems are, as well as how difficult it is to increase production and to coordinate supply chains for food, medicine, respirators, and protective equipment. The pandemic in these countries has exposed the damage of these administrative reforms in the public sector’s resilience of socio-economic systems (Chazan, 2020; Bouckaert et al., 2020). There are also success cases in emerging markets. For instance, in India, Kerala's successful response to the crisis is also the result of long-term health investments and of a successful public-private partnership model (Mazzucato & Quaggiotto, 2020). The government of Vietnam had also timely recognized the complexity of the problem, so it decided to close its borders early, and rapidly pushed for the development of low-cost test kits (Klingler-Vidra et al., 2020). Countries in Eastern Europe quickly imitated successful crisis management practices from Southeast Asia with closing their borders and making face masks mandatory for the public (Shottet & Jones, 2020). From these examples it is clear that during pandemic crises governments must respond to these emergencies by planning and implementing rapid actions and mobilizing their resources. Moreover, it becomes obvious that effective governance requires skills and abilities for both flexibility and resilience (Drechsler & Kattel, 2020; Wu et al., 2018). Greece has taken important measures to modernize its activities and protect citizens and workers from the pandemic (Casquilho-Martins & Belchior-Rocha, 2022). The Ministry of Digital Government of Greece brings together the IT and telecommunications infrastructure to providing digital services to residents and companies. Its strategic goal is to create the necessary framework for Greek citizens and businesses to truly benefit from the European Union's single digital market, including the ability to design and use efficient digital services in a variety of sectors such as public administration, justice, health, energy, entrepreneurship and transportation (Georgios & Nikolaos, 2021). Despite the negative effects of COVID-19, the Greek government took the opportunity to develop and upgrade e-government services to help Greek citizens connect with government services while staying at home during duration of the lock. This development was not only vital to making government services safer, easier and more user-friendly to the public in the fight against COVID-19, but also to making much-needed services available on the Internet. Finally, Greece continues to expand its digital services to many other sectors to achieve a unified government system and help companies and citizens benefit from this application by saving money and resources.

Methodology
In order to measure the factors that impact on the success of digital adoption in public organizations, a 39-item questionnaire was distributed. In total, 251 public employees from middle and senior management participated in the research. The research took place during the lockdown period from October 2020 to March 2022. This sample allows us to proceed with reasonable and reliable statistical results and to draw valid conclusions. In addition, the validity of the questionnaire is ensured by the synthesis of questions of already published questionnaires in international surveys but also by the findings that came from the literature. The study examined the relationships between the components of Service Quality, Information Quality, and Perceived Impact on the organization and the dependent variable which is the Degree of Adoption (DA) of digital governance in a public organization. Component analysis is used to reduce the number of variables to fewer component numbers, with three eventually being retained (IQ, SQ and PI). The Cronbach Alpha reliability test was used to measure the reliability of each component. The data were analyzed using the multiple regression routine of SPSS software version 24. It was also considered important for the researchers to investigate the views and attitudes of the Greek public sector employees, regarding the digital transformation of the country that became more intense during the current pandemic crisis. Hammarberg et al (2016) suggest using the interview as a complementary tool when a quantitative study has been conducted and qualitative data is required to validate measurements or to explain the meaning of the findings. For this reason, the tool of the structured interview was used, in which 30 middle executives participated. The analysis of their answers was done using the thematic analysis. Table 1 with the KMO and Bartlett's Test shows that the sample data were suitable for component analysis (KMO = 0.803 > 0.60, Bartlett test significance < 0.001) (Yong, 2013; Kinnear & Gray, 2011).
From the total number of participants (N = 251) 209 (72.2%) were females and 42 (27.8%) were males. Table 2 shows the predictive ability of the three components mentioned (Service Quality (SQ), Information Quality (IQ) and Perceived Impact (PI) on the organization), concerning the adoption of digital governance. As we observe from Table 1, Service Quality (SQ), Information Quality (IQ) and Perceived Impact (PI) are positively related to the adoption of digital governance within a public organization and have a statistically significant effect on the outcome variable (p value <0.05) (Yong & Pearce, 2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.94</td>
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<tr>
<td>SQ</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>2.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>IO</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From these results it is obvious that the quality of services has a significant impact on the adoption of digital governance in a public organization and refers to concepts such as perceived ease of use, i.e., the degree to which the structure of the e-service portal is clear and easy for the user to navigate and is aligned with the needs of individual users. It also addresses issues of availability and accessibility of the online service at any time and to the extent that the online service portal operates quickly and facilitates everyday life. It also refers to the quality of the online transactions between the users of the service with other companies or organizations. This finding confirms the literature regarding the importance of ease of use, access and navigation in a digital environment for the successful integration of digital governance (Gilbert et al., 2004; Zeebaree et al., 2021; Sherzod, 2022; Ullah et al., 2021). Digital accessibility can be a key factor in creating public value. For example, it improves the lives of people with disabilities, enables productivity and integration through participation in education, economics and politics. The COVID-19 pandemic stressed that the quality of public sector’s digital infrastructure is fundamental to the well-functioning of economies and the well-being of citizens. Next, the quality of information also has an important relationship with the adoption of digital governance in a public organization. It refers to concepts such as trust and security (for example, obtaining the username and password on the portal, transaction security in the online service, the availability of a data recovery plan, reliability and sequence of the GDPR, the privacy policy so that users have easy access to the respective service while browsing the site, the use of the site of digital signatures for the authentication of users, the monitoring of citizens’ activity). This finding is also supported by the literature as a lot of studies have pointed the significance of trust in the effective implementation and acceptance of digital transformation in the public sector both from citizens and employees (Gilbert et al., 2004; Vooglaid & Randma-Liiv, 2022; Mishra et al., 2021; Cahlikova, 2021; Freire & Casarin, 2021; AlAbdali et al., 2021; Zeebaree et al., 2021; Sherzod, 2022). Public confidence and trust are at the heart of the digital reform of the public sector, both as a lever and as a result of such a reform. It is important for citizens as well as for employees to feel that they are in control of what happens to personal data and that they are not at risk of malicious cyber activities that could threaten their personal well-being. Finally, the perceived impact on the organization also has a significant positive relationship with the adoption of digital governance in a public organization. In this component, important parameters related to the Equipment / Resources, the Policy / Strategy followed by the public organization as well as the Organizational Culture and Leadership were examined. There are again many studies which confirm the finding (Ebrahim & Irani, 2005; Al-Tkhayneh et al., 2019; Hai et al., 2021; Falk et al., 2017; Basyal & Wan, 2020; Milakovitch, 2021; Lewis, 2017; Lokuge et al., 2019; Cinar, et al., 2019; Wipulanusat et al., 2019; Ruiz-Alba et al., 2019).

Regarding the impact of Covid-19 on digital transformation of the public sector we can see that the current pandemic created opportunities and forced the majority of countries to react. During the interviews employees were asked about how they feel with the recent and intensive appearance of digital governance and digitization in their workplace and in the public sector in general. It is noteworthy that their answers did not focus on technological factors. Asked about the factors that prevent them from smoothly integrating digital governance into their daily work practices, they said they do not feel they have the support of leadership so that they can successfully meet the new demands. They reported on issues of lack of information and training of staff but also on the urgent need to change the organizational culture and obtain the necessary equipment (27 of the 30 people referred to these factors). At the same time, they pointed the importance of training the citizens to develop their digital skills and successfully use the digital services. The majority of respondents are ‘changing the culture of the public sector; continuing education of executives-informing citizens’. The minority of participants discussed about the need to change the current infrastructure, with the possibility of interaction in the entire public sector. They consider it necessary to integrate unified information systems that will communicate with each other and in common throughout the public system, e.g., document management system. Finally, they consider it necessary to have a strategic plan for digital transformation that will be specialized in the digital transformation of each ministry and their agencies, so that there is a plan of electronic services at a central level for all bodies of the public and not individually. However, all of them stated that given the bureaucratic mentality that prevails in the public sector of the Greek State, since its inception, what should be emphasized is the change of the culture of the country and the public sector in Greece, in order to overcome the bureaucratic entanglements that hinder the development of the State. They believe that the current pandemic was an opportunity for rapid changes in the public sector which should have been implemented since many years before.

**Conclusions**

Today, countries and industries face many challenges due to many technological developments. The public sector in most countries is trying to adapt to the new environment and take advantage of new technologies. Thus, public organizations not only improve their efficiency but also the experience and satisfaction of their citizens, creating public value. Some countries have largely succeeded in adopting new technologies in their efforts to reduce bureaucracy and improve their efficiency, but others still have a long way to go to achieve the desired results. In summary, this study supports previous research findings that the prerequisites for a successful digital transition of government are not restricted to technological difficulties. The introduction and use of new technologies by governments is sometimes impeded by organizational, institutional, and legal concerns, according to several situations. This is frequently explained by the fact that new technologies are anticipated to challenge almost every government process, system, and structure. These changes are difficult and necessitate radical reforms. Transformation is frequently considered in the literature as the ultimate objective of the development of digital governance, implying a move from public sector digitalization to broader government changes. Multiple stages of change and redesign, not just of the organizational processes involved, but also of regulatory and institutional components, are required to maintain this transition. In order to rebuild the capacity of the public sector after COVID-19, public administration must be seen from a new perspective. Investing in long-term skills and competencies in public organizations provides sources of flexibility and responsiveness during deep crises and their consequences. Lessons learned from successful COVID-19 responses show that preparing for future crises means investing in key public sector competencies and capabilities, including the ability of organizations to interact with other value creators in society - designing contracts for delivery to the common interest. The results can be useful for policy makers in their day to day management practices, while they will also provide useful information for top managers in their management decisions and actions concerning the creation of public value through an effective digital reform.

**References**


Entrepreneurship
A survey on innovation in smart port cities: the business perspective

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Abstract:

The innovative vertical domains (e.g., Industry 4.0,) and their respective applications, shift entrepreneurial and market needs into a new era. The adoption of digitalization and “smart living” from various industries promise better quality of life and producing.

Nowadays, rapid technological innovations (e.g., IoT, 5G, AI, Blockchain) provide opportunities to port cities not only to transform the way that ports operate and handle traffic flows, but also to develop their localities. Ports are also large organizations, heavily networked into local communities and they are often a prime motor of economic development in certain areas. This study considers the impact of technological innovations on port and non-port related businesses and activities on their vicinity.

Despite the growing interest in smart ports, little research has been conducted in the maritime industry on how utilization of innovative technologies affect the development smart port cities, especially in small islands.

This study initially introduces the smart and green port city concepts and their underlying architecture; it considers the impact of technological innovations on port and non-port related businesses and activities on their vicinity, in terms of business growth opportunities, trade, employment etc.; further, it explores business drivers towards adoption of such technologies; and provides practical guidance for dealing with smart port challenges and opportunities.

City, port and non-port activity related data is drawn from a range of available secondary sources, while views and opinions are gauged using a brief questionnaire administered to a stratified sample of Oinousses’ local businesses, residents and visitors. Moreover, in-depth interviews are held with local authority “people”, champion members, entrepreneurs and people working by and near the port in order to enhance understanding on how technological innovations may facilitate growth and economic development of port and non port-related business and activities.

Analysis is geared towards identifying port-related non port-related parameters and parameters of interest to the underlying population.

The preliminary investigation indicates that there is a strong association between adoption of new technologies and opportunities for further development of port cities and their port and non-port related businesses and activities on their vicinity. Innovative technologies may become a prime motor of economic development in island areas and may create unique opportunities in terms of business growth, expansion and employment in port cities.

Moreover, the study introduces a number of variables facilitating growth of port cities and provides future directions on those managerial aspects which may also affect further growth and development of smart ports.

Keywords: Smart Ports, Smart Islands, Insularity and Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Local Economic Impact
References:


Constraining factors towards entrepreneurial intent amongst students at a South African university

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Abstract:
It is undeniable that entrepreneurship holds power to impact economic and societal prosperity in a country. Technological innovation and increased competitiveness for businesses directly result from entrepreneurial activities. If a country is unsuccessful in creating new businesses, it faces the risk of economic stagnation and unproductivity. Over the past years, the unemployment rate in South Africa has increased significantly, posing a significant concern for graduates. Although universities may provide entrepreneurship-specific education and opportunities to enable students to develop the necessary entrepreneurial skills to pursue entrepreneurship as a career, increased entrepreneurial intent is still reliant on a number of factors and influenced by several constraints. This study aimed to explore the constraining factors towards entrepreneurial intent amongst students at a South African University. The results indicated that business skills, resources and preparedness, and communication are the main factors constraining entrepreneurial intent. Furthermore, there was also a positive correlation between business skills and lack of communication skills affecting perceived behavioural control as entrepreneurial intent. Based on the results, it is imperative for universities to not only focus on entrepreneurship-specific education in undergraduate programmes, but even more so to provide opportunities for students to practically develop and master business and communication skills relating to entrepreneurship, to actively overcome these constraints to increase entrepreneurial intent amongst students

Keywords: entrepreneurial intent, constraints, students, South Africa
Introduction
Entrepreneurship has long been considered as an essential mechanism for economic and social prosperity of a country (van Vuuren, 2018). Entrepreneurs serve as the catalysts of entrepreneurship through economic development, job creation, productivity and technological innovation (Ribeiro-Soriano, 2017). Therefore, without entrepreneurs a country faces the risk of economic stagnation and unproductivity (Kritikos, 2015). South Africa characterised as an emerging economy is seen as one of the largest economies in Africa (McManus, 2018). However, the country continues to grapple with challenges such as, dwindling entrepreneurial activity, low economic growth, poverty, and high unemployment (Musara et al., 2020). The country presented one of the highest unemployment rates recorded internationally standing at 34.5 percent in the first quarter of 2022 (Statistics South Africa, 2022). Moreover, the latest unemployment data indicate an unemployment rate of 42.1 percent (Statistics South Africa, 2022) among South African youth (individuals between the ages of 25 and 34), irrespective of their education level. The youth’s contribution to the economy is significant due to their productive ages (Global Employment Trends, 2020). Worryingly though, the increasing unemployment rate pose a significant employment concern for graduates (Mseleku, 2020). Therefore, entrepreneurship in South Africa plays an essential role in the survival and growth of the country’s economy as it contributes to alleviating low economic growth, high unemployment, and poverty (Zwane, et al. 2021). To address these imbalances, the South African government, and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South Africa are focusing on development efforts that will enable the youth in following entrepreneurship as a career path (Zwane, et., 2021). This is evident from the number of supporting mechanisms by government and entrepreneurship-specific education and training by universities (Boldureanu et al., 2020). However, evidence from the literature suggests although universities may provide entrepreneurship-specific education and opportunities to enable students to develop the necessary entrepreneurial skills to pursue entrepreneurship as a career (Din et al., 2016), increased entrepreneurial intent is still reliant on a few factors and influenced by several constraints that needs to be addressed by government and HEIs (Amanamah et al., 2018). Intention describes an individual’s readiness to perform a certain behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1974). The term entrepreneurial intent also known as entrepreneurial interest refers to an individual’s readiness to start a new business or add value in existing businesses (Kong et al., 2020). Chhabra et al., 2020 opine that entrepreneurial intent relates to entrepreneurial awareness and a future course of action to be performed. From a review of entrepreneurial literature, it is asserted that there are two well known models of entrepreneurial intention namely, Shapero’s (1975) Entrepreneurial Event Model (EE) and Ajzen’s (1991) model using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TBP). Shapero’s model poses entrepreneurial intention as a desire to engage in entrepreneurial activities whilst Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behaviour highlights three main determinants (attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control) that impact entrepreneurial intention. Recent studies (Mfazi & Elliott, 2022; Ali, 2016; Krithika & Venkatachalal, 2014) have demonstrated that the most relevant determinants of entrepreneurial intention include perceived behavioural control and subjective norms. Perceived behavioural control is defined as an individual’s perception of the ease or difficulty to perform a certain behaviour of interest (Anggraini et al., 2019). Hardin-Fanning and Ricks, 2017 describe perceived behavioural control as an individual’s consideration to carry out a certain behaviour when the individual believe they have the resources and the opportunities to perform the behaviour. Conversely, subjective norms refer to the action where an individual view the ideas of others before they engage in a certain behaviour (Sanne & Wiese, 2018). Wills et al., 2022 define subjective norms as the belief of whether an individual’s family, friends will approve or disapprove a certain behaviour. Subsequent studies (Nsahlai, 2020; Hamilton & Mostert, 2019; Malebane 2015) found that entrepreneurial intention is influenced by several constraints such as business skills, resource preparedness, start-up logistics, unsupportive external environment, fear of failure, communication, and risk management.

Business skills are associated with the necessary requirements needed to start a business (Mamabolo et al., 2017). The most frequently reasons for entrepreneurial aversion include inability to adapt to changes in the environment, lack of leadership skills, and poor planning practices (Malaj & Dollani, 2018). Resource preparedness refer to availability of resources and opportunities for the possible entrepreneur to establish and grow a business (Amanamah et al., 2018). The constraints can range from a shortage of resources needed and not having enough entrepreneurial opportunities to a lack of adequate entrepreneurship training, market experience, and market research (Kanu, 2018). Start-up logistics represent not having a worthy business idea, inadequate funds and financing, and technical incompetence (Scott, 2017). Bushe, 2019 stated that inadequate funds are often cited as one of the primary constraints facing entrepreneurship. Unsupportive external environment pertains to factors in the external environment that play a role in influencing an individual’s willingness to become entrepreneurial (Oliveira & Rua, 2018). According to (Amanamah et al., 2018) individuals face numerous environmental constraints during the entrepreneurial process such as, too many rules and regulations to enter the market, too many competitors, lack of family support, and an unwillingness to leave a job. Fear of failure signify that an entrepreneur can encounter risky situations, however a certain degree of
failure can influence entrepreneurial intention (Agyeman et al., 2021). Communication is seen as an essential skill to introduce a new business idea (Sood, 2017). However, ineffective communication skills, poor interpersonal relationships, and the inability to clarify business goals are perceived constraints to entrepreneurial intention (Meyer & Mostert, 2016). Unwillingness to take risks as entrepreneurs are confronted with several risks when engaging in entrepreneurial activities that may affect their intention to start a business (Sarri et al., 2018). While several studies have been conducted on entrepreneurial constraints (Valdez-Juárez et al., 2020; Sharma, 2018; Kebaili et al., 2017) and entrepreneurial intention amongst students (Nikou et al., 2019; Al-Shammari & Waleed, 2017; Henley et al., 2017), limited research studies link constraining factors to entrepreneurial intention, specifically focusing on South African university students.

Research Methodology
This study aimed to provide an analysis of constraining factors towards entrepreneurial intent amongst students at a South African University. A descriptive research design and a single cross-sectional approach were followed for this study.

Sampling Method
Students formed the target population for the specific study. The students included in the target population were enrolled at a South African university in the Gauteng Province full-time. The sampling frame consisted of one campus located in the Gauteng province. A non-probability convenience sample of 328 undergraduate students was included in the main study, where a quantitative research approach was followed. Furthermore, a positivist approach was adopted to ensure the objectivity of the researcher towards the study, data collection, and actual research (Collins, 2010; Remenyi, et al., 1998). A descriptive research design was followed to address the empirical portion of this study.

Research instrument and data collection
A semi-structured, self-administered questionnaire was distributed to collect the necessary data for this study. This was done in order to provide an analysis of constraining factors towards entrepreneurial intent amongst students at a South African University. The sections of the questionnaire focused on capturing data based on whether four main aspects: (i) respondents' intent to become an entrepreneur, (ii) certain demographical variables, and (iii) respondents' perceived constraints to entrepreneurship. For students' perceptions of the constraints to entrepreneurship, 27 items were analysed based on a four-point Likert scale without a neutral point. This was used to motivate commitment to a specific opinion relating to the item in the questionnaire (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011). Before the data gathering process commenced, the questionnaire was piloted on a convenience sample of 56 students. This was done to establish reliability, and the results did not form part of the primary sample. Hereafter, the necessary permission from the lecturers was obtained before the questionnaires were distributed to students.

Sample description
From the total number of 338 questionnaires that were distributed, 319 questionnaires were completed and usable for inclusion in data analysis, resulting in a 94 percent response rate. Both female participants (62.0%) and male participants (38.0%) were represented in the sample. To present a demographic profile of the respondents, descriptive statistics were used. Furthermore, exploratory factor analysis was used to interpret and investigate the factors constraining entrepreneurial activity. and correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between the constraining factors and entrepreneurial intent. Respondents participated voluntarily in this research study. No relevant personal information was gathered from the respondents through the questionnaire to protect the privacy and identity of the respondents involved in this study.

Data analysis
After the completed questionnaires were coded, it was captured in Microsoft Excel, and after that, the captured data was processed and analysed with Version 25 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) for Windows. For the purpose of this study, the statistical analysis of the gathered data included reliability and validity analysis, descriptive analysis, exploratory factor analysis, and correlation analysis.

Reliability & Validity
For the entire scale, a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.739 was computed measuring constraining factors towards entrepreneurial intent among students. The computed Cronbach's Alpha is above the 0.70 level suggested by Pallant (2016) and Brace et al. (2012). An average inter-item correlation of 0.458 was calculated. The recommended range of 0.15 to 0.50 for reliability was exceeded, thus proving further reliability (Clark & Watson, 1995) and suggesting convergent and discriminant validity of the scale measuring the constraining factors toward entrepreneurial intent.
Results and Discussion
The following sections will provide an overview and discussion of the results from this research study.

Demographic profile of respondents
From the total number of distributed questionnaires (338), 319 completed questionnaires were deemed usable. The descriptive analysis of the data revealed that 62% of the participants were female, and 38% were male. Furthermore, the participants were between 20 (28.3%) and 19 (20.6%) years. Concerning race and year of study, the majority of participants (83.5%) were of the African race (black ethnic group), and 77.4% were in their first year of study. Table 1 provides a detailed description of the aspects included in the demographic profile section of the questionnaire.

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<td>38.0%</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
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<table>
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<th>Age</th>
<th>4.8%</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Study</th>
<th>77.4%</th>
<th>11.3%</th>
<th>8.5%</th>
<th>0.9%</th>
<th>1.9%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
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<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-graduate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ own compilation

Beyond the aspects included in the demographic section of the questionnaire, participants also had to indicate their intent to pursue entrepreneurship. The responses are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Sample description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you intent to become an entrepreneur?</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>79.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 clearly indicated that the majority of the participants intent to become an entrepreneur by starting their own business. Thus, considering their response, it is imperative to determine the constraining factors towards entrepreneurial intent, as this will influence entrepreneurial success among students in the South African context.

Exploratory Factor Analysis
The main focus of this research was to determine the constraining factors towards entrepreneurial intent among students at a South African University. In order to do this, an exploratory factor analysis formed part of the statistical analysis. To determine the suitability of the principal component analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett test of sphericity were examined. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure for the study was 0.888 and based on the requirements suggested by Field (2009), the measure was acceptable. Furthermore, the Bartlett test was significant (p<.00001) thus, the reduction of data employing the principal component would be justifiable (Pallant, 2005). Seven factors based on the constraints toward entrepreneurial intent exist, on which a factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed. For item inclusion, factor loadings of 0.45 were used. An eigenvalue of 1 was also used for the factor extraction criterion. The seven factors represent 63% of the total variance. The factors identified were clustered according to similarity in features. The constraining factors towards entrepreneurial intent were labelled as Business Skills (Factor 1), Resource Preparedness (Factor 2), Start-Up Logistics (Factor 3), Unsupportive External Environment (Factor 4), Fear of Failure (Factor 5), Communication (Factor 6), and Risk Management Capabilities (Factor 7). The eigenvalues for these factors ranged from 1.035 to 8.418. Cronbach’s coefficients were examined for each of the
seven factors to determine the reliability of the analysed data, and it served as a measure for internal consistency. Five of the seven factors delivered acceptable Cronbach's Alpha values that were above the suggested level of 0.7 (Field, 2009). The values for Factors 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 were above 0.7, indicating very high levels of internal consistency and reliability. The Likert scale in the questionnaire assisted in identifying each factor from categorised items. The latter was used to calculate mean values for each factor to ultimately determine the importance of each factor. Table 3 provides an overview of the exploratory factor analysis.

Table 3: Factor analysis for the constraining factors towards entrepreneurial intent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor Label</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
<th>Mean Values and Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Inter-item Correlation Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Skills (Factor 1)</td>
<td>0.856</td>
<td>3.17 (±0.62)</td>
<td>0.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources Preparedness (Factor 2)</td>
<td>0.836</td>
<td>3.00 (±0.55)</td>
<td>0.460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start-up Logistics (Factor 3)</td>
<td>0.623</td>
<td>2.53 (±0.38)</td>
<td>0.368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive External Environment (Factor 4)</td>
<td>0.719</td>
<td>2.75 (±0.59)</td>
<td>0.339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Failure (Factor 5)</td>
<td>0.751</td>
<td>3.08 (±0.73)</td>
<td>0.605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication (Factor 6)</td>
<td>0.782</td>
<td>3.09 (±0.61)</td>
<td>0.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Management Capabilities (Factor 7)</td>
<td>0.607</td>
<td>2.38 (±0.37)</td>
<td>0.344</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to Factor 1 (mean value: 3.17) 5 items were categorized based on similar characteristics. These items included the inability to adapt to changes in the environment, lack of leadership skills, and poor planning practices, and subsequently the factor was labelled 'Business Skills'. This agrees with the findings of Malaj & Dollani, 2018 as well as Mamabolo et al., 2017 who indicated that changes in the environment and the dearth of certain business skills constrain individuals to be entrepreneurial. It is of utmost importance that students identify strategies to overcome their lack of business skills, specifically concerning the ability to adapt to the changing business environment, planning practices, and leadership in order to overcome this constraining factor. If they can improve their general business skills, their self-confidence will ultimately increase, leading to an increase in entrepreneurial activity. Factor 2 was labelled 'Resources Preparedness,' consisting of 6 items and yielded a mean value of 3.00. The items categorised in this factor included several similarities and ranged from a shortage of resources needed to start and run the business and not enough entrepreneurial opportunities to a lack of adequate entrepreneurship training, market experience, and market research. Previous research conducted by Amanamah et al., 2018 also indicated that lack of funds, lack of entrepreneurial training and support and lack of entrepreneurial opportunities negatively influence entrepreneurial intention. Enabling student entrepreneurs to be prepared for the resources needed to start and run a business successfully will enable them to capitalise on the entrepreneurial opportunities that do present themselves. However, to improve their ability to be prepared in terms of resources needed, they must get adequate entrepreneurship training. Addressing these critical issues will prevent them from ineffectively using valuable resources in their entrepreneurial endeavours. Three items were categorized to form Factor 3, labelled Start-Up Logistics. These three items included not having a worthy business idea, inadequate funds and financing, and technical incompetence. This proves to agree with research conducted by Bushe, 2019 who indicated that business incompetence (including ideas, financing, and technicalities) impacts an individual to become entrepreneurial. Inadequate start-up logistics impact entrepreneurial intent as, without a worthy business idea and the funds and technical competence to act on the business idea, the entrepreneur's success will be questionable. It is imperative for universities to assist students in developing technical competencies aimed at business idea generation and conceptualization, simultaneously providing support for technical competencies to seek business ideas and utilize these as valuable entrepreneurial opportunities. Factor 4 was labelled 'Unsupportive External Environment'. This factor consisted of five items and yielded a mean value of 2.75. Items included in this factor were an unsupportive business environment, too many rules and regulations to enter the market, too many competitors, lack of family support, and an unwillingness to leave a job. Previous research by Amanamah et al., 2018 also identified competitors, lack of family support, and an unwillingness to leave a job as constraining factors towards entrepreneurial intent. As was the case with factor 3, universities need to support students in developing the knowledge and skills concerning governmental rules and regulations and challenges arising from an unsupportive external business environment, in general, to overcome this specific constraint affecting entrepreneurial intent. Furthermore, Factor 5 (Fear of Failure) yielded a mean value of 3.08 and consisted of two items: fear of failure and aversion to risk. This agreed with the findings of Agyeman et al., 2021 who indicated that fear of failure have a negative impact on students’ entrepreneurial intention. Being able to overcome the fear of failure and being willing to take risks are ultimately crucial skills for any entrepreneur to develop. Generally, student entrepreneurs can overcome this constraint to entrepreneurial intent by being paired with a mentor (an established entrepreneur that has experience in entrepreneurial success and failure) who can guide them through the entrepreneurial process where they experience challenges, failures and risk taking, by focusing
on the valuable learning opportunities boasted by events of failure and risk. For factor 6, three items were categorised based on similarities, yielding a mean value of 3.09. Factor 6 was labelled ‘Communication’, and the items included ineffective communication skills, poor interpersonal relationships, and the inability to clarify business goals. Research conducted by Meyer & Mostert, 2016 agreed with these findings, stating that ineffective communication skills, poor interpersonal relationships, and the inability to clarify business goals are perceived constraints to entrepreneurial intention. It is important for entrepreneurs to develop excellent verbal and non-verbal communication skills which will enable them to clarify goals, and more effectively communicate their value proposition and goals to stakeholders. Effective communication skills impact entrepreneurial intent, as it has an influence on entrepreneurs’ self-confidence in communicating their business idea, their challenges, the support, and resources needed, as well as their unique selling point, which can all determine entrepreneurial success. The last factor, Factor 7 was labelled ‘Risk Management Capabilities’ included three items, with a mean value of 2.38. The factors categorised for factor 7 included unwillingness to take risks, lack of risk management capabilities and a lack of adequate manpower. This correlated with findings from Sarri et al., who found that entrepreneurs are confronted with numerous risks when entering the business world that may affect their decision to become entrepreneurial. Student entrepreneurs should recognise that risks are a part of the entrepreneurial process, and that they will have to overcome their unwillingness to take risks if they aim to capitalise on the entrepreneurial opportunities in their environment. However, to overcome the unwillingness to take risks, it is important to develop risk management capabilities that will enable student entrepreneurs to manage the risks effectively. An exploratory factor analysis was also conducted to determine the factors for entrepreneurial intent. Two factors were identified. Table 4 provides an overview of the exploratory factor analysis for entrepreneurial intent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor Label</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>Mean Values and Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Inter-item Correlation Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Behavioural Control (Factor 1)</td>
<td>0.728</td>
<td>2.98 (±0.54)</td>
<td>0.313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Norms (Factor 2)</td>
<td>0.554</td>
<td>2.21 (±0.58)</td>
<td>0.236</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to Factor 1 (mean value: 2.98) 6 items were categorized based on similar characteristics and this factor was labelled 'Perceived Behavioural Control'. These items included the fact that they have seriously considered entrepreneurship as a highly desirable career choice, already begun the planning for opening a new venture, will not start a business as it is too risky, or they could easily pursue entrepreneurship as a career choice if they chose to do so. This agrees with the findings of Alogwija et al., 2020 who ascertained the effect of perceived behavioural control on students’ entrepreneurial intention. This factor indicates the extent to which the students can control their entrepreneurial intent in their considerations to adopt entrepreneurship as a chosen career choice. Factor 2 yielded a mean value of 0.236, included 4 items and were labelled 'Subjective Norms'. The items included the fact that students care what their closest friends and families think about their employment decision, the level to which they believe their closest family and friends think they should become self-employed, what their lecturers think about their employment decision and the fact that they are interested in business because they have family and friend who have their own businesses. Research conducted by Bhuyan and Pathak, 2019 confirmed that the opinions from family and friends are critical to students during their employment decision. It is important to recognise that at the age of the respondents of this study, they might be highly susceptible to the opinions, approval and support of their friends and family. This implies that closest friends and family may have an influence on their entrepreneurial intent. The constraining factors to entrepreneurial intent as set out in this section was further used to determine the correlations between the constraining factors, and the factors for entrepreneurial intent.

**Correlation Analysis**

Spearman rank order correlation (non-parametric) was applied to determine the degree of the relationship and association between two variables: constraining factors and entrepreneurial intent. Table 5 provides an overview of the relationship between the constraining factors and entrepreneurial intent where the correlations were interpreted according to the guidelines as set out by Cohen (1988). Cohen (1988) suggests small rho = .10-.29; medium rho = .30-.49; and large rho = .50-1.0.
From Table 5 significant but small correlations exist between Business Skills and Perceived Behavioural Control \((r_s=0.154)\), as well as Communication and Perceived Behavioural Control \((r_s=0.184)\). These significant positive correlation between business skills and perceived behavioural control imply that as students’ business skills improved, their willingness to consider entrepreneurship as a desirable career choice will increase, as well as the possibility that they may have already started with a business venture. Furthermore, the correlation between communication and perceived behavioural control also suggests that as students improve their communication skills, interpersonal relationships and their ability to clarify business goals, it will also have a significant impact on their willingness to consider entrepreneurship as a highly desirable career choice, and the possibility to start with a business venture. It is thus imperative for universities in South Africa to place a strong focus on the development of both business and communication skills in an effort to increase the level of entrepreneurial intent.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this research article was two-fold: firstly, to determine the constraining factors toward entrepreneurial intent, and secondly, to investigate the relationship that exists between the constraining factors and entrepreneurial intent factors. The constraining factors identified included Business Skills, Resources Preparedness, Start-Up Logistics, Unsupportive External Environment, Fear of Failure, Communication, and Risk Management Capabilities, with Business Skills yielding the highest mean value. For the factors identified for entrepreneurial intent (Perceived Behavioural Control and Subjective Norms), Behavioural Norms yielded the highest mean value. This research study confirmed some of the findings of previous research studies (Alberto & Yuri, 2020; Vamvaka et al. 2020; ). This study concludes that universities in the South African context should place a strong focus on and employ a significant amount of effort in developing business and communication skills among students. From the results, it is evident that the improvement of business skills and verbal and non-verbal communication will have a significant favourable influence on the entrepreneurial intent of South African students. As students steadily develop their business skills and learn to communicate more effectively, they will naturally consider entrepreneurship a highly desirable career choice. This can ultimately result in students who become entrepreneurs starting a business venture while still studying, leading to graduates who are job creators instead of job seekers. If this is achieved, there will be a significant increase in entrepreneurial activity, as the number of youth entrepreneurs in South Africa will increase, impacting the high unemployment rate. Limitations of this study included the fact that research was only conducted on one campus of one South African university. Considering that contexts in the different provinces of South Africa differ significantly, conducting the same study at different universities in different provinces may yield different results. This can enable universities to develop customized programs to increase entrepreneurial intent among students across South Africa. Future research possibilities also include conducting this research study at an international level, by including universities in other countries with similar contexts, challenges, and opportunities as South Africa, to gain insights into a comparative international perspective regarding the constraining factors towards entrepreneurial intent among students.

**References**


Sustainability myopia in entrepreneur’s personal orientation to sustainable marketing

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Keywords: sustainability orientation, sustainability meanings, personal motivations, marketing ethics, marketing myopia.

Abstract

Purpose

“By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature” (UN SDG 12, target 12.8). This UN call for promoting sustainable patterns lead researchers to explore if entrepreneurs and decision makers are authentically aware of sustainability fundamentals, and to examine their personal orientations to sustainability (Khizar et al., 2022). Since their personal motivations and orientation to sustainability may influence actions of the entire community, it is relevant to discover which meanings decision-makers recall when they think about “sustainability”. In recent years, decision-makers have come under increasing pressure in terms of sustainability and sustainable development - according to the well-known definition given by the WCED, the “Brundtland Commission” (1987): “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. In minor rural areas, often suffer of being a marginalised economy (Briedenhann et al., 2004), local decision-makers play an important role to drive suitable development conditions.

This background inspire our RQ “What are the meanings of sustainability perceived by decision-makers in rural area?”.

Research methodology

An initial theoretical phase, for reviewing relevant literature related to individuals and organizational sustainability orientations, found very few studies on sustainability-related personal motivations of decision makers of rural areas, and as such our project aims to start filling this gap. This exploratory qualitative research is the first step of a broader research design, and it has conducted to highlight diverse sustainability meanings and orientations, discussing with decision-makers on sustainability solutions for tourism. The context is “area Colli Berici” in Northern Italy: this geographical area is large about 165 km², and call for preservation of its common cultural roots and natural heritage, but it is highly fragmented in political, economic and social decisions. Decision-makers are majors of 24 small towns, few entrepreneurs of local businesses, mainly manufacturers and farmers. They want to leverage their local strengths (i.e., nature, typical products and authenticity), and identify slow tourism to lead the entire community moving towards sustainable development (Di Clemente et al., 2015, pp. 23-37). The data collection relies on semi-structured interviews, video recorded and transcribed, with 18 decision makers of this area (7 policy makers, 9 entrepreneurs and 2 change makers). Four other follow up meetings and conferences engaged local citizens, politicians and family businesses. We conducted the data collection and analysis in a team of diverse researchers (2 professors and 2 research assistants, with different background) in order to reduce our own bias (Eisenhardt, 1989; Oppermann, 2000). Triangulation approach helps for strengthening the validity of the analysis. We have interpreted data through Nvivo coding, adopting the GIOIA methodology for research protocol, analysis and interpretation (2021).
Results
It emerges that the prevailing meaning attributed to sustainability refers to the economic sphere, emphasizing a clear but poor common vision in terms of environmental and social sustainability. Sustainability in rural areas could be a matter of myopia rather than a matter of a holistic orientation. There is a tendency to consider “possible” only some specific investments (i.e., actions to protect the environment, reduce consumption and CO2 emissions) that are economically sustainable in order to ensure the livelihood and survival of those who implement them. These results suggest that in marginalised areas, sustainability might be only a mean for ensuring a return on profits, a non-ethical marketing tool. Being aware of this myopia might just be a good start, or a risk of failure if there are no future reactions. As such, discussing these results with participants, it emerged the need to educate the entire community to sustainability fundamentals for tourism, to share a common vision that rebalance social and environmental goals and roles of each member. This is why we had to conduct extra follow-up meetings, and has been invited as guest speakers in conferences with citizenship. Other further findings, actually still in progress, are already showing a change in sustainability orientations of individuals that actively participating in our research program.

Originality/Value
This research contributes to explore sustainability orientations of decision makers and entrepreneurs, discovering the existence of critical Sustainability Myopia, often hidden in personal motivations, which may block effective sustainable actions and decisions for an integrated strategy for sustainable development.

References
General
Around the (Sales Management) World in 80 Hours: A Cross-Cultural Examination of Unique Sales Characteristics, Processes, Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

In the context of the disruption presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, we investigate sales management issues in twenty-four countries, including the unique characteristics of successful salespeople, organizational adaptation and response to change, and future opportunities and challenges facing each region. While there has been much discussion about these topics in the sales literature, very little research has examined them at a global level, comparing and contrasting different points of view. We do so, drawing evidence from video recorded panel discussions that were conducted for the 2021 Global Sales Science Institute (GSSI) / American Marketing
Association (AMA) Annual Conference. These interviews feature insights from 76 sales executives from around the globe. Our inductive investigation serves as a catalyst for new and relevant avenues for international sales research and sheds light on issues facing sales practice globally.
The relationship between leader humility and employee voice: managerial openness as a mediator

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Abstract:
Leader humility has been shown to affect employee voice. However, relatively little is known about the underlying mechanisms that explain this relationship. To address this gap, this study highlights the role of managerial openness as a mediator. Results from a sample of 148 employees working in a large mobile network operator showed that leader humility relates to managerial openness and the latter is associated with employee voice. Taken together, we highlight managerial openness as mediator in the relationship between leader humility and employee voice. Theoretical and practical implications are also discussed.

Keywords: leader humility, managerial openness, employee voice, mediation

Introduction
Contemporary theoretical and empirical research has highlighted the positive role of humility in leadership. Humble leaders have been shown to foster a host of emotional, attitudinal, and behavioural employee outcomes such as employee engagement and psychological safety (Walters & Diab, 2016). In this vein, previous studies have shown the effect of leader humility on employee voice (Liu, 2016). However, only a few studies have attempted to explain the aforementioned relationship (e.g. Li, Li, Fu, & Ullah, 2019). Utilizing a relatively novel and understudied in the literature construct, namely managerial openness, the present study examines its mediating role in the relationship between leader humility and employee voice.

In summary, this study adds to the literature in three ways. First, it contributes to the existing empirical research on the outcomes of leader humility. Second, it identifies leader humility as an antecedent of managerial openness. Third, by emphasizing management openness as an underlying mechanism, the current study provides a better understanding of the association between leader humility and employee voice.

Theoretical Background

Leader Humility
Humility is defined as “being more humble, modest, respectful, down-to-earth and open-minded rather than arrogant, self-centered or conceited” (Peters, Rowatt, & Johnson, 2011: 155). Modesty and low self-esteem are commonly related with humility (Tangney, 2000). However, humility refers to the personal attribute of maintaining a low focus on self and a significant focus to others (Wright, Nadelhoffer, Thomson Ross, & Sinnott-Armstrong, 2018). According to positive psychologists (Wright et al., 2017), humility has been linked to implicit self-esteem (Rowatt, Powers, Targhetta, Comer, Kennedy, & Labouff, 2006), state empathy (Labouff, Rowatt, Johnson, Tsang, & Willerton, 2012), ethical orientation, and reaction to disagreement. Humility consists of six positive aspects, namely viewing oneself accurately, willingness to admit a mistake and realize weak points, willingness to listen to new ideas and receive feedback, acknowledgement of others’ abilities and accomplishments, transcendence (e.g., understanding that they are part of something greater), and appreciating the various ways others contribute to our world (Oc, Bashshur, Daniels, Greguras, & Diefendorff, 2015).

According to several leadership theories, humility is an essential component of effective leadership (Bass, 1985; Collins, 2001). For example, humble servant leaders tend to promote followers’ commitment (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004). Leaders who are self-aware, adaptable, and appreciative of others’ abilities, for instance, are more likely to demonstrate servant leadership qualities such as giving credit to their colleagues even though this leads to remain in the background (Morris, Brotheridge, & Urbanski, 2005). Similarly, one of the most widely stated qualities of humility, self-awareness is seen as a crucial characteristic for an authentic
leader (Morris et al., 2005; Ou et al., 2014; Owens & Hekman, 2012). According to Rajah, Song and Arvey (2011), humility has also been identified as a key characteristic of both servant and charismatic leaders. In addition, humility helps a transformational leader to generate and communicate better their vision, as they exhibit inspirational motivation (Barbuto & Burbach, 2006). Moreover, it is supported that socialized charismatic leaders tend to be humble with their altruistic and self-transcendent orientation (Nielsen, Marrone, & Slay, 2010). However, personalized charismatic leaders tend to be less humble as they express narcissistic and selfish behaviours. According to Ou et al. (2014), humility is regarded as beneficial and effective only to the extent that it is recognized as genuine by others. Thus, individuals who demonstrate modest acts without adding a self-less perspective seem inconsistent over time (Bharanitharan et al., 2021).

In the workplace, leader humility promotes a variety of individual-level organizational outcomes, including subordinates’ feelings of trust and psychological empowerment (Jeung & Yoon, 2016), creative performance (Ye, Tung, Li, & Zhu, 2020) as well as employee voice (Li et al., 2019) and job satisfaction (Owens, Johnson, & Mitchell, 2013). In addition, leader humility promotes beneficial outcomes at the team level, such as team effectiveness, team psychological capital, collective humility (Rego et al., 2017), learning orientation (Owens et al., 2013), and innovation (Liu, Mao, & Chen, 2017). However, power distance and task interdependence, for example, have been shown to reduce the positive effects of leader humility (Hu, Erdogan, Jiang, Bauer, & Liu, 2018; Liu et al., 2017).

Managerial Openness
Managerial openness is defined as ‘subordinates’ perceptions that their boss listens to them, is interested in their ideas, gives fair consideration to the ideas presented and at least sometimes takes action to address the matter raised” (Detert & Burris, 2007: 871). The degree to which subordinates are thought to be encouraged to make suggestions is referred to as perceived managerial openness (Premeaux & Bedeian, 2003). Managerial openness exists when employees are supported to express their thoughts by management, or if established mechanisms for sharing their opinions to management are available, or both (Cetin, 2013). Top management openness refers to subordinates’ normative ideas about what organization expects from them concerning their contribution, as well as their perceptions of whether supervisors create an atmosphere that encourages employees (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). It has been proven to have a significant and positive influence on affective conflict. Furthermore, it assists the exchange of knowledge (Flowers, Xia, Burnett, & Shapiro, 2010).

Employee Voice
The term “employee voice” is described as “proactive and constructive “speaking-up behavior,” in which employees express their ideas, information, and opinions” (Kim, Knutson, & Coi, 2016: 567) and as “making innovative suggestions for change and recommending modifications to standard procedures even when others disagree” (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998: 109). When the organization nourishes employee voice, there is greater managerial performance and lower involuntary turnover (Burris, Detert, & Romney, 2013). Employee voice helps to rectify a problem with management through expressing a complaint to the line manager, leads to improvements in quality and procedures and achieves long-term viability for both the organization and its employees (Dundon, Wilkinson, Marchington, & Ackers, 2004). Employee voice enables leaders to collect valuable information from their subordinates (Ashford, Sutcliffe, & Christianson, 2009). On this basis, workplaces that cultivate and facilitate employee voice, tend to be more attractive to work (McCarthy & Keller, 2021).

Despite the multiple advantages of employee voice in the workplace (McCLean, Burris, & Detert, 2013; Vera & Rodriguez-Lopez, 2004), making voice decisions is a difficult and sophisticated process. This results from the fear of being viewed or labeled negatively, like a troublemaker or a complainer when employees point out their colleagues’, supervisors’ and management’s faults (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003). Organizational – based indicators play a major role in the voice decision-making process, according to previous studies (Milliken et al., 2003). Due to their prominent positions and authority in organizations, leaders are crucial aspects in the organizational setting, as they should demonstrate to subordinates that leaders and followers are working toward the vision together (Nielsen et al., 2010).

Hypothesis Development
Leader Humility and Managerial Openness
Leader humility has been related to favorable results for subordinates, leaders, and organizations. Leaders that demonstrate humility are likely to inspire employees to create a learning mindset, see problems as chances to improve, and identify with their work, leading in higher engagement and job satisfaction (Owens & Hekman, 2012; Owens et al., 2013). Humility in a leader may lead to receptivity to new ideas, recognition and appreciation of others’ contributions, and acceptance of one’s own limits and failures (Oc et al., 2015; Owens et al., 2013).
In the context of an organization, leader humility is an interpersonal trait that includes being ready to see oneself correctly; valuing others’ talents; and being teachable to new ideas (Owens et al., 2013). Based on this definition, a humble leader is required to admit both his or her talents and faults, as well as to welcome new ideas by applauding subordinates' skills and accomplishments and supporting them to express themselves. Humility has also been identified as a critical characteristic for business leaders (Wallace, Chiu, & Owens, 2016). For example, humble leaders are more open about (and conscious about) their own limits, more responsive to ideas and recommendations from their subordinates, and more cognizant of their followers' capabilities – all of which might lead to followers shaping leadership processes (Ye et al., 2020). Thus, leaders who are humble may be perceived as more open to new ideas. We, therefore, hypothesize the following: H1. Leader humility positively influences managerial openness.

Managerial Openness and Employee Voice

While people opt to speak or keep silent for a variety of reasons, research has repeatedly shown that employees are more encouraged to direct their voices upward when they believe their supervisors are receptive to feedback. Openness happens when a manager “listens to employees, is interested in their input, and gives fair consideration to their ideas and suggestions” (Morrison 2011: 389; Detert & Burris 2007). Managers’ openness and supportiveness can create a favorable environment for expressing new ideas and complaints (Ashford et al., 2009). When subordinates see their leaders adjusting to address an issue they identified, they think they have the chance and ability to impact decision-making that is related to work. Thus, managers can make right decisions through information they gather from their subordinates (Saunders, Sheppard, Knight, & Roth 1992). Detert and Burris (2007) found that when leaders listen intently to and act on a follower's proposal, they convey a powerful signal to followers that the voice behavior in their work units is suitable and welcomed. Leaders that have a high level of management openness are more likely to encourage their staff to share their thoughts, beliefs, and recommendations (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998).

These beliefs increase subordinates’ views of the effectiveness of voice behavior and the likelihood that expressing their thoughts and feelings will result in organizational change, which motivates them to engage in more voice behavior (Morrison, 2014). Furthermore, Shepherd, Patzelt and Berry (2019) indicated that when followers see their managers as more open-minded, they are more likely to report task faults. Individuals may regard issue telling as less hazardous and having a greater perceived chance of success if management is considered as transparent and helpful, according to Dutton and Ashford (1993). High management openness conveys a message to employees that their input is valued and encouraged (Ashford et al., 1998; Detert & Burris, 2007). Employees will not fear major punishment or personal loss if their bosses are viewed as open-minded (Burris, 2012). Employees will see management openness as offering numerous chances to make recommendations and voice concerns, and therefore will feel more comfortable expressing their thoughts. As a result, followers’ perceptions of the dangers associated with open communication are reduced and are more inclined to engage in vocal activity (Edmondson, 2003; Lebel, 2016). This leads to higher employee voice. Many prior studies have highlighted the beneficial relationship between management openness and employee voice. According to Saunders et al. (1992), employees were more likely to speak up when they believed their bosses (a) made reliable, fair, and effective decisions, (b) welcomed employee involvement, and (c) were accessible to employees and did not punish those who expressed their opinions or concerns. Employees prefer to suppress rather than share information or their thoughts regarding organizational concerns in organizations when managers are not tolerant of differing viewpoints (Ashford et al., 1998; Huang, Vliert, & Vegt, 2003). Taking charge has been linked to perceived responsibility, personal efficacy, and top management openness (Morrison & Phelps, 1999).

Thus, managerial openness is likely to result in higher employee voice (Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson, 2003; Milliken et al., 2003; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012; Tröster & van Knippenberg, 2012). We, therefore, hypothesize the following: H2. Managerial Openness positively influences employee voice.

Leader Humility and Employee Voice through Managerial Openness

Up to this point, it has been proposed that leader humility influences managerial openness (H1). In addition, it has been suggested that managerial openness is positively related to employee voice (H2) and according to the literature, leader humility affects employee voice (Liu, 2016; Ma, Wu, Jiang, & Wei, 2019). Furthermore, by displaying teachability, humble supervisors give a message of openness to learning (Owens & Hekman, 2012). This feature lets employees feel less threatened by risks. Accepting criticism, being open-minded, and cultivating an inclusive culture in the workplace all make it simpler for subordinates to come up with new ideas (Abbas & Wu, 2019). Consequently, humble leaders show openness which in turn raises employee voice. Combining the preceding hypotheses and literature, it is anticipated that managerial openness may comprise an underlying mechanism through which leader humility is associated with employee voice. Managerial openness
can be a plausible mediator as it refers to a set of leader behaviors that motivate subordinates to speak up (Detert & Burris, 2007). Thus, the following hypothesis is formed:

H3. Managerial openness mediates the relationship between leader humility and employee voice.

Methodology

Sample and Procedure

In this study, participants in this study were employees in the telecommunications sector. More specifically, the sample was formed by employees, who work in areas related to customer service in a large mobile network operator. The research was quantitative and was conducted with the tool of the questionnaire, which contained closed-ended questions with multiple choice, Likert scale and number completion questions for age, tenure, etc. The questionnaire was developed on the LimeSurvey platform.

A range of techniques was used to minimize potential method bias (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, & Lee, 2003). The structured questionnaire, for example, was self-administered and guaranteed to be anonymous. We approached managers of different departments who forwarded the questionnaire to their subordinates between December 2021 and January 2022. The employees were informed about the purpose of the research and their participation was voluntary.

Initially we distributed 200 survey forms. Of this initial sample, 148 valid questionnaires were returned (excluding incomplete questionnaires), yielding a response rate of 74%. Of the 148 respondents who participated in the study, 43.2% were male and 56.8% were female, while 42.6% of the sample (63 participants) hold a permanent job and 41.9% (62 participants) are employed with a contract. The average age of the employees was 29.45 years (SD = 8.39; ranging from 18 to 56 years). As regards the educational level, 49.3% held a bachelor’s degree (73 participants) whereas 20.3% a master’s degree (30 participants). The average of the working hours was almost 38 hours. Last, respondents reported an average organizational tenure of 3.47 years (SD = 4.89; ranging from 0 to 32 years) and job experience of 7.89 years (SD = 7.49; ranging from 0 to 38 years).

Measures

The measurement scales of the current study were adapted from the existing literature. In previous research, these scales have shown adequate reliability and validity (e.g., Ashford et al., 1998; House & Rizzo, 1972). Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with each item statement. All scale reliabilities (Cronbach’s α) were acceptable, exceeding the value (0.70) that Nunnally et al. (1967) recommended.

Leader humility was assessed with the nine – item scale from Owens et al. (2013). An example item is “This leader admits it when he or she does not know how to do something”. This measure was answered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Cronbach’s α for this scale was 0.903.

Managerial openness was measured with the six – item scale from House and Rizzo (1972). This scale contains items such as “My manager cares about my opinions” and “My supervisor is interested in ideas and suggestions regarding safety”. This measure was answered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with higher scores indicating more perceived openness. The Cronbach’s α for this scale was 0.936.

Employee voice was measured using the three – item scale from Madrid, Patterson, and Leiva (2015). A sample item is “Usually, I make recommendations concerning issues that affect my work”. These items ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), too. The Cronbach’s α for this scale was 0.778.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for all variables are presented in Table 1. Leader humility is positively related to managerial openness (r = 0.39, p < 0.01), and employee voice (r = 0.23, p < 0.01). Likewise, managerial openness is positively correlated with employee voice (r = 0.31, p < 0.01).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader Humility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial Openness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Voice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: **p< 0.01

Hypothesis tests

To test the present hypothesis, we used SPSS macro (Preacher & Hayes 2004). Table 2 shows the respective results. The results supported the first hypothesis (H1) which stated that leader humility is positively related to
managerial openness (B = 0.46, S.E. = 0.09, t = 5.13, p < 0.01). Similarly, the results demonstrated a positive relationship between managerial openness and employee voice (B = 0.23, S.E. = 0.07, t = 3.16, p < 0.01) providing support for the second hypothesis (H2). Likewise, the results supported the mediation hypothesis (H3), which proposed the mediating role of managerial openness in the relationship between leader humility and employee voice. More specifically, bootstrapping analysis (5000 bootstrap samples with 95% confidence intervals) found support for this indirect effect since the confidence intervals do not include zero (0.03, 0.20). It should be noted that the direct effect of leader humility on employee voice is not supported (p > 0.01).

Table 2. Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managerial Openness regressed on Leader</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Voice regressed on Managerial</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness controlling for Leader Humility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Voice regressed on Leader</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility controlling for Managerial Openness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bootstrap results for indirect effect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>L95% CI</th>
<th>U95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients reported. Bootstrap sample size 5,000. L = lower limit; U = upper limit, CI = confidence interval.

Discussion

Theoretical Implications
This study looked at the mediating role of managerial openness in the relationship between leader humility and employee voice. The findings revealed an indirect relationship between leader humility and employee voice via managerial openness.

The current study adds to the existing literature on leader humility. Although previous research has indicated a link between leader humility and employee voice (Li et al., 2019; Lin et al., 2017; Liu, 2016; Ma et al., 2019), little is known about why humble leaders achieve higher employee voice. As a result, by emphasizing the mediating role of managerial openness, this study adds to the understanding of the underlying processes that explain the relationship between leader humility and employee voice. The findings imply that being a humble supervisor improves managerial openness as viewed by employees, resulting in increased employee voice. Moreover, these findings add to existing empirical research into the outcomes of leader humility. By far, the literature on the antecedents of managerial openness is scant (Zhu & Akhtar, 2019). Thus, this study identifies leader humility as an antecedent of managerial openness.

Practical Implications
The current findings have some important implications for supervisors and organizations from a practical viewpoint. First, given the beneficial role of leader humility in generating management openness and, eventually, employee voice, companies and supervisors may need to be more cognizant of this effect. Thus, leaders should remain humble to thoroughly discover their employees' beliefs and skills, and they must promote employee voice in order to improve organizational processes and efficiency. Supervisors, for instance, should be humble, acknowledge their limits, respect the benefits of followers' feedback, openly applaud subordinates, demonstrate readiness to learn from others, seek advice from subordinates, and appreciate followers' efforts. During the hiring process, organizations should aim to recruit humble leaders and establish training programs on the benefits of humility. The association between management openness and employee voice is another practical conclusion of the current findings. According to this research, if companies want to increase employee voice, they must create a work atmosphere that encourages transparency.

Limitations and Future Research Directions
There are certain issues in this study that need to be addressed further. Employing a cross-sectional design and utilizing single-source data may lead to causality and common method variance issues. Thus, the research may show correlations higher than the real ones. Likewise, we used as a sample employees in mobile network industry, which limits the generalizability of the present findings. Several areas for future research may develop because of these restrictions. First, future empirical research may use an experimental design to test the current hypotheses. They will be able to demonstrate more solid causal links in this way. Second, using other-report data or a longitudinal strategy, future studies might reduce the risk of common method bias. Supervisors, for instance, might evaluate employee voice. Third, future studies might also benefit from looking into different mediators that could explain the link between leader humility and employee voice. Last, additional empirical research could be used to replicate the current findings in various companies and sectors.
Conclusions
In summary, the present study attempted to delineate how leader humility relates to employee voice. The results demonstrate that leader humility increases managerial openness as perceived by employees, and, in turn, managerial openness has a positive effect on employee voice. Taken together, this study points out the mediating role of managerial openness in the association between leader humility and employee voice.

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The influence of soft total quality management practices on teachers’ job satisfaction

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Abstract
The purpose of the research is to investigate the adoption of the principles of TQM (Total Quality Management) in Primary and Secondary Education schools in Greece. The views of primary and secondary teachers on the TQM and its application in schools are investigated, as well as the level of teachers’ job satisfaction and its relationship with the adoption of the TQM philosophy in schools. The tool chosen to explore the objectives of this research was the quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire that completed by 91 teachers from primary and secondary schools. The results on whether the TQM is applied in the primary and secondary education schools in Greece showed that to a large extent there is a school culture adapted to the soft practices of Total Quality Management. Overall, it was observed that teachers are moderately satisfied with their work, while the level of job satisfaction of teachers is related to the school culture that is consistent with the principles of Total Quality Management.

Keywords: Total Quality Management; Common Assessment Framework; Education; Job Satisfaction & Performance

1. INTRODUCTION
In today’s age of globalization and rapid technological advances, significant changes are taking place in societies and education systems. All education systems are looking for ways to adapt to new social and economic requirements, to continuously improve the education provided. Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management philosophy that aims to improve customer satisfaction and organizational performance. In the literature, moreover, it has been linked to job satisfaction. In addition to the business sector, TQM has been recognized as a successful management philosophy also in the field of Education.

Total Quality Management is a strategy used in management to achieve quality work at all levels of the organizational process. It involves the integration of all functions and processes within an organization to achieve continuous improvement of quality and services (Baird, Jia Hu & Reeve, 2011). It aims to achieve or even exceed customer expectations by emphasizing employee participation and consistent orientation towards quality (Deming, 2000). According to Luthans (1995), TQM is a participatory system that empowers employees to take responsibility for improving the quality of the organization. In this way, it enhances communication between employees and teamwork to improve results. It has been recognized as a key strategy to ensure the competitive advantage of organizations and improve overall performance and effectiveness (Pambreni, Khatibi, Azam & Tham, 2019).

The TQM requires all staff members to be committed to providing quality services and products (Babatunde, 2020). Most studies agree that TQM includes both ”hard” and ”soft” elements, with the former involving a variety of tools and techniques and the latter mainly involving human-related factors (Bon & Mustafa, 2013). More specifically, the ”hard” elements of TQM refer to the improvement of the production process by several design and control tools, such as the development of quality functions (QFD) and statistical control (Lam, 1995). The ”soft” elements aim at developing customer awareness, employee development, and ensuring their commitment to quality.

In recent years there has been an increased focus on the ”soft” elements of TQM, as they have been recognized as essential for the successful implementation of TQM, as well as for human resource management (Al & Johl,
2021). According to Powell (1995) organizations that use the “soft” elements of TQM can outperform their competitors who have not applied such practices. In the same way, organizations that do not focus on the “soft” elements of TQM (including aspects of human resources) in their programs are doomed to fail (Rodrigues, 2000). In the relevant literature, the “soft” elements of TQM have been associated with employee job satisfaction (Ahmed and Idris, 2020). In particular, the soft TQM aspects are mainly concerned with the management of human resources in a way to achieve the results of employees' job satisfaction.

Apart from the business sector, TQM has been identified as a successful management philosophy in the Education sector as well. Dahlgaard et al. (1995) claimed that the educational culture should be characterized by increased customer satisfaction through continuous improvements, in which all employees and students actively participate. The present study is an attempt to identify the extent to which primary and secondary public schools in Greece implement practices/policies (especially the soft side of TQM) for effective implementation of TQM, which are mainly based on human factors and human resources. Furthermore, job satisfaction levels of primary and secondary school Greek educators are measured, and an attempt to explore their possible association with the "soft" TQM practices within schools.

This study aims to identify which elements of TQM are applied in the management of preliminary and secondary schools in Greece. In particular, we attempt to investigate whether the soft side of TQM is implemented in school management regarding the following factors: teamwork, employee participation, empowerment, recognition and reward, education and training, and organizational change/culture. After exploration of these factors, an attempt is also made to measure the job satisfaction levels of Greek educators and associate them with the specific factors of TQM explored. Our purpose is to determine whether TQM elements are related to higher job satisfaction levels among Greek educators and explore the impact of these TQM factors on teachers' job satisfaction.

2. METHODOLOGY

The tool chosen to investigate the objectives of this research was the quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire that was constructed consisted of three sections. The first section included questions about demographics (gender, age, marital status, length of service, employment level, employment relationship) of teachers. This information was particularly important in ensuring that respondents came from a variety of backgrounds and that the sample taken covered a wide range of respondents with different characteristics and backgrounds. The second section of the questionnaire attempted to explore elements of Total Quality Management in Education and was based on the tools proposed by Zhang et al. (2000) and Lau and Idris (2001). These tools were adapted for the needs of the present research to fit the education sector and finally, 30 questions were formulated on a scale of 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. More specifically, six main domains of TQM were explored: School culture, Education and training, Empowerment of educational work and processes, Teamwork, Recognition of effort and reward, and Involvement of teachers. The third section of the questionnaire aimed to measure job satisfaction using JS Survey (JSS) designed by Paul E. Spector (1997). The instrument contains 36 items that are divided into nine domains: Pay, Promotion, Supervision, Fringe Benefits, Contingent rewards, Operating conditions, Coworkers, Nature of work, and Communication. Each item is scored from 1 to 6 with the higher scores on the scale representing more job satisfaction. The questionnaire was completed by 91 teachers from primary and secondary schools.

3. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the results of the analysis based on the Pearson correlation coefficient between Total Quality Management strategies in education and the domains of teacher job satisfaction. The analysis showed that a high level of school culture that is consistent with Total Quality Management is positively related to the level of satisfaction of teachers by their supervisor (r = 0.763, p = 0.000), of possible rewards (r = 0.225, p = 0.032), from coworkers (r = 0.470, p = 0.000) and from workplace communication (r = 0.536, p = 0.000). Also, the analysis showed that a high level of school culture that is consistent with Total Quality Management is positively related to the overall level of teacher satisfaction (r = 0.430, p = 0.000). In addition, it appears that a philosophy that enhances the development and training of teachers to improve the quality of services provided is positively related to the level of satisfaction of teachers by their supervisor (r = 0.598, p = 0.000), by coworkers (r = 0.419, p = 0.000), from the nature of the work (r = 0.291, p = 0.005) and the communication in the workplace (r = 0.498, p = 0.000). Also, the analysis showed that a philosophy that enhances the development and training of teachers to improve the quality of services provided is positively related to the overall level of teacher satisfaction (r = 0.382, p = 0.000).

Similarly, Table 33 shows that a philosophy that enhances the empowerment and autonomy of teachers to provide quality services is positively related to the level of satisfaction of teachers with their salary (r = 0.245, p
motion \( (r = 0.254, p = 0.015) \), their supervisor \( (r = 0.579, p = 0.000) \), from possible rewards \( (r = 0.258, p = 0.014) \), from coworkers \( (r = 0.396, p = 0.000) \) and from workplace communication \( (r = 0.443, p = 0.000) \). Also, analysis showed that a philosophy that enhances the empowerment and autonomy of teachers to provide quality services is positively related to the overall level of teacher satisfaction \( (r = 0.519, p = 0.000) \). The analysis showed that the adoption of strategies that stimulate teamwork in schools is positively related to the level of satisfaction of teachers by their supervisor \( (r = 0.594, p = 0.000) \), by colleagues \( (r = 0.388, p = 0.006) \), by the privileges / benefits \( (r = 0.338, p = 0.001) \) from the nature of their work \( (r = 0.375, p = 0.000) \) and from workplace communication \( (r = 0.341, p = 0.001) \). Also, the analysis showed that the adoption of strategies that stimulate teamwork in schools is positively related to the overall level of teacher satisfaction \( (r = 0.474, p = 0.000) \). In addition, the analysis showed that the reward of good effort is positively related to the overall level of teacher satisfaction \( (r = 0.286, p = 0.006) \), by coworkers \( (r = 0.317, p = 0.002) \), by its nature their work \( (r = 0.375, p = 0.000) \) and from communication in the workplace \( (r = 0.546, p = 0.000) \). Also, the analysis showed that the reward of good effort is positively related to the overall level of teacher satisfaction \( (r = 0.261, p = 0.012) \). Finally, the analysis showed that the participation of teachers in processes related to the operation of the school unit and the decision-making process is positively related to the level of satisfaction of teachers by their supervisor \( (r = 0.388, p = 0.006) \), by the privileges / benefits \( r = 0.338, p = 0.001 \) from colleagues \( r = 0.414, p = 0.000 \), from the nature of their work \( r = 0.340, p = 0.000 \) and from communication in the workplace \( r = 0.389, p = 0.012 \).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total satisfaction</th>
<th>Pay</th>
<th>School culture</th>
<th>Education and training</th>
<th>Strengthening educational work and processes</th>
<th>Teamwork</th>
<th>Recognition of effort and reward</th>
<th>Teacher participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.430</td>
<td>.382**</td>
<td>.519**</td>
<td>.474**</td>
<td>.261*</td>
<td>.194</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note(s):</td>
<td>**p ≤ 0.01, *p ≤ 0.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 1. Bivariate correlation matrices for soft TQM and job satisfaction domains

Multiple linear regressions analysis was then performed to examine which domains of Total Quality Management are associated with teachers’ job satisfaction. Table 2 shows the results of multiple linear regression in which the domains of Total Quality Management were used as independent variables and teachers’ overall job satisfaction was used as the dependent variable. The results showed that the domains of Total Quality Management explain 39.17% of the variability of total job satisfaction of teachers \( (R^2 = 0.391, F = 18.817, p = 0.000) \). The parameters of Total Quality Management that are important in predicting overall satisfaction are "Strengthening educational work and processes" \( (b = 0.263, t = 3.326, p = 0.001) \), "Teamwork" \( (b = 0.212, t = 2.612, p = 0.011) \) and the "Teacher Participation" \( (b = 0.155, t = 2.254, p = 0.027) \).

Table 2. Multiple linear regression results between overall job satisfaction and the soft TQM domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.657</td>
<td>.253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School culture</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and training</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening educational work and processes</td>
<td>.263</td>
<td>.079</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of effort and reward</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher participation</td>
<td>.155</td>
<td>.069</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note(s): Dependent Variable: Overall job satisfaction
4. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the adoption of the principles of Total Quality Management in Primary and Secondary Schools in Greece and to investigate whether this is related to the level of teacher satisfaction. The results on whether the TQM is applied in Primary and Secondary Schools in Greece showed that to a large extent there is a school culture adapted to Total Quality Management, and to a moderate extent there is a philosophy that enhances the development and training of teachers to improve the quality of services provided, to a large extent there is a philosophy that enhances the empowerment and autonomy of teachers to provide quality services and to a moderate extent promotes teamwork and cooperation. In addition, the results showed that in the Primary and Secondary Education schools in Greece, a good effort is rewarded to a considerable extent and the teachers participate in processes related to the operation of the school unit and the decision-making process.

Finally, the findings showed that there is a significant correlation between some domains of TQM with the job satisfaction of teachers. More specifically, it turned out that the level of job satisfaction of teachers is related to the school culture that is in line with Total Quality Management, the possibilities of teacher training and education, the empowerment and autonomy of teachers, and the adoption of strategies that stimulate teamwork. In addition, the results showed that in the Primary and Secondary Education schools in Greece, a good effort is rewarded to a considerable extent and the teachers participate in processes related to the operation of the school unit and the decision-making process.

References

Artificial Intelligence in Agriculture Market of India: Advances and Challenges

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Abstract:
In India after 1990’s usage of information technology started and it has a major impact in rural areas. Information technology has boosted agriculture, rural employment, baking system, administrative procedure. The recent growth in artificial intelligence has come up with drastic opportunities in economic and social areas. AI is emerging as major tool for agriculture health. Technology has made the agriculture cycle more modern starting from growing the crops to marketing it to customers. He latest techniques have helped the farmers to identify the potential of their land, compatibility of land and crops, discussion and guidance with other farmers and agricultural scientist through, recent chat system through FarmChat system farmers get the guidance in natural language through speech based conversation system. Mobile applications have also made a significant impact on the life of the farmers. Percentage share of Gross Value Added (GVA) of agriculture and allied sector to total economy was 20.2 in 2020-21 (PIB). In , India AI is used for crop and soil monitoring, predictive agriculture analytics, supply chain management and agriculture robotics. India is a country with more than six lakh villages and AI may accelerate the growth of rural economy. The objective of the study is to analyze the impact of AI on agriculture market.

Keywords::Artificial Intelligence, Rural, Agriculture

Introduction
Agriculture is the indubitable is major source of livelihood of majority of population. The majority of India’s poor (some 770 million people or about 70 percent) are found in rural areas. It is the world’s largest producer of milk, pulses, and spices, and has the world’s largest cattle herd (buffaloes), as well as the largest area under wheat, rice and cotton. It is the second largest producer of rice, wheat, cotton, sugarcane, farmed fish, sheep & goat meat, fruit, vegetables and tea. The country has some 195 m ha under cultivation of which some 63 percent are rainfed (roughly 125m ha) while 37 percent are irrigated (70m ha). In addition, forests cover some 65m ha of India’s land (World Bank). Wholesale agricultural marketing is undertaken by the network of 6946 regulated wholesale markets, set up under the provision of respective State Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act. The Government of India has been working continuously and has taken several concrete steps to link the farmers with markets in order to help the farmers in trading and realizing competitive and remunerative prices for their produce (India Budget). Parallel to India’s tremendous successes in the modernization of agriculture, smallholder farmers have been marginalized. The average debt of a farming household has risen fivefold in a decade, while increases in farm incomes have not kept up, and more than 300,000 Indian farmers have committed suicide since 1995 (Mckinsey). It is projected that production growth in agriculture will be predominantly located in emerging economies and low-income countries and will be driven by productivity-increasing investments in agricultural infrastructure and research and development, wider access to agricultural inputs and improved management skills in these regions (OECD).

AI and Agriculture market
Agriculture is the mainstay occupation in many countries worldwide and with rising population, which as per UN projections will increase from 7.5 billion to 9.7 billion in 2050. Indian agriculture accounts for around 19 per cent of GDP (RBI), and primary source of livelihood for about 58% of India’s population. World Bank report (2018) submits that there is an enlargement in land share for agriculture from 58.8 % (1961) to 60.4 % (2018). Indian agriculture is scattered with low infrastructure; trust in conventional methods of production, lack of awareness, low literacy, low availability of seeds and fertilizers, climate challenges and poor credit system.

Problem identification
Land is not increasing in same pace as population is increasing, better resources are required to develop balance. For sustainable development of agriculture a holistic approach is required in terms of food security, rural
employment, usage of environment friendly technologies in areas of soil conservation, natural resource management and protection of biodiversity. Information technology has emerged as a facilitator in varied areas of life. Farmers are not untouched by this. They are adopting IT as they feel it more convenient. Government has adopted information technology for awareness programs, dissemination of information, and collection of data. AI has emerged as an effective tool to reduce human error, available 24X7, support smart decision making, solving complex problems, reduce repetition and increase the efficiency of stakeholders.

The global artificial intelligence market size was valued at USD 93.5 billion in 2021 and is projected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 38.1% from 2022 to 2030. AI’s ability to analyze huge volumes of data, understand relationships, provide visibility into operations, and support better decision making makes AI a potential game changer. (McKinsay) Artificial Intelligence is used in providing advisory and information services, supply chain management, financial linkage, identifying the real time impact of the agriculture techniques and technologies. AI magnifies the scope of activities done in varied areas.

**Objectives of study**

The major objective of the study is to identify the impact of artificial intelligence on agriculture market. Although there is immense scope of AI in agriculture market and the farmers can take advantage of it. India is a country where multiple languages are spoken in local accent, villages are scattered, farmers are less literate, and lack of infrastructure also exists. We need to understand the constraints so get optimum benefit.

**Literature review**

With advancement of agricultural science and technology, multiple options to access modern technologies have become available. It is evident from the replacement of indigenous varieties of seeds by high-yielding varieties and traditional equipment and practices by power tillers, tractors and others machines. (Das, Bibhunandini) The success of a particular innovation or technology depends on whether the technology satisfies the needs of its users (Freeman, 1987).

The growth and development of the agriculture sector can be achieved through the effective deployment of Information Communication Technology (ICT). ICT has been a significant contributor to the growth and socio-economic development in countries, where ICT is deployed effectively (FAO).

Ayim, C., Kassahun, A., Addison, C. (2022) highlight that apps and services on mobile phones which are mostly targeted at farmers allow farmers to access financial and extension-advisory services such as weather, market, and agriculture advice. The use of remote sensing technology which is one of the enabling ICT technologies is also available within the sector but mostly accessible to researchers and agribusinesses only for research-related purposes.

Timmer (2009) claims that historically, no country has been able to sustain a rapid transition without increasing productivity in the agriculture sector first. Through higher productivity, agriculture is able to provide food, labor, and savings to the process of urbanization and Industrialization (Johnston and Mellor, 1961).

**Impacts of AI on agriculture market**

A farmer has to confront various situations as identification of temperature, quality of soil, weather condition, sowing of seeds, identify the nutrition required for crops, pest control, utilization of fertilizer, detecting weeds, cultivation, harvesting, segregation, transportation, distribution. Artificial intelligence can be utilized in varied areas of agriculture market. Table 1 depicts the AI usage in agriculture product market

| Table-1 |
### Benefits of AI

- **Raising agriculture productivity** - Robotic machines are used for bulk harvesting with more accuracy. It saves the time and energy.
- **Labor productivity** - By assessing and analyzing the capability of workers and utilizing with better methods through AI enhance the capacity of the workers.
- **Compatibility between farmer and mechanization** - IN AI decisions are taken from preceding gathered information applying a set of algorithms. It reduced the error and increase accuracy with a greater degree of precision.
- **Reduce environment damage** - Through AI the need of electricity, water, sunlight can be assessed and balanced utilization can be managed.
- **Minimize error** - Human creates errors from time to time. As machines are programmed through proper analysis, it reduces the error in agricultural works.
- **Fast solution for problems** - The advancements in AI technologies from basic Machine Learning to advanced Deep Learning models have made it capable to solve complex issues. It reduces the expenses and increases productivity.
- **Better knowledge about customer** - Through AI the usage of transport vehicle can be optimized and the assessment of customer preference and satisfaction can be done efficiently.
- **Reduce cost through automation** - AI helps in reducing cost by efficient use of resources. AI increases the production through automate the labor intensive process.

### Challenges for AI in India

- **Low Technical awareness** - India is a developing country and farmers are technically illiterate, it scares them to use AI.
- **High cost of artificial intelligence** - AI require adequate algorithm for better performance. It needs judicious data, its analysis and compatibility with the target beneficiary. Hence is costly for developing areas.
- **Low affordability of farmers** - As AI is at infancy stage and it requires more cost which is more than affordability of the farmers. Farmers are more dependent on credit system and there is lack of finance for AI tools and techniques.
- **Social and cultural barriers** - Social norms and cultural issues play a vital role in rural areas. Farmers are sticky towards their traditional technologies and social barriers boost them.
- **Expensive expert workforce with fewer substitutes** - Farmers feel that to handle AI and they have to be dependent on expensive workforce.
- **Difficulty for getting suitable vendor and service provider** - In rural areas still there is low accessibility of trained persons for information technology and AI require more technical vendors and efficient service provider, which is also a problem in rural areas.
- **Low trust** - Fear to unknown is also an issue for agriculture market.

**Conclusion**

AI is emerging as a major tool for market there is more scope in agriculture. Usage of mobile technology is increasing in rural areas. Application of sensors, photographs through mobiles, IoT devices, image through drone and satellite, data collection for crops and weather, soil medication, mandi price etc with predictive models have helped the farmers to take better decisions about seeds, fertilizers, pesticides that are of critical importance during pre-harvest and post-harvest stages. Government is working on making the technology affordable that can add a value to agriculture eco-system.

Artificial Intelligence Technologies are making positive changes across Indian agriculture, and an increasing number of agri-tech startups in the country are working to develop and implement AI-based solutions. Usage of technologies will definitely improve farmers’ access to markets, inputs, data, advisory, credit and insurance.

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Knowledge management contribution in marketing field: bibliometric analysis

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Abstract:
The purpose of this research is to analyse the importance and influence of the knowledge management in the marketing field (Bennett & Gabriel, 1999; Oliva & Kotabe, 2019; Rowley, 2004; Schlegelmilch & Penz, 2002). The purpose of this analysis includes fundamental issues such as (i) document the size and growth of the literature in this topic, (ii) identify the key authors, journals, and documents, (iii) the countries with the highest rate of productivity, (iv) highlight emerging topics and how these features form into the conceptual structure of each domain, and (v) analyze the methodology approach. To conduct this goal, the content of validated journal articles related to Knowledge Management (KM) and Marketing of the Web of Science (WoS) database between 2010 and 2020 was analysed using a bibliometric analysis method which allows to visualise and mapping the most recent areas of KM research domain applied in marketing. The principal objectives of a bibliometric analysis were the measurement of impact, references set of papers to analyse the impact of journals, mapping the scientific fields in addition to others (Chaudhuri, Chavan, Vadalkar, Vrontis, & Pereira, 2021; Farooq, 2021; Gaviria-Marín, Merigó, Baier-Fuentes, & Change, 2019). This research could contribute to the scientific production and be valuable for researchers and managers on KM and marketing because reveals research priorities and recent developments in these areas.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Marketing, Bibliometric Analysis

Acknowledgment
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Literature Review
RQ1: How can we systematize and identify advances in knowledge management and family business research by going through key papers, theories, methodologies, and variables of interest in existent literature?
RQ2: In which context are knowledge management and family business studied?
RQ3: What is the relationship between knowledge management and family business?
RQ4: Which conceptual model of knowledge management and family business were tested, and what marketing issues were addressed?
RQ5: What are the directions for future research and its implications?
References


Examining the relationship among High Performance Organizations, Knowledge Management Best Practices, and Innovation: Evidence from Greek public sector

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Introduction

In knowledge society, Knowledge Management (KM) is a critical factor for performance and innovation improvement, as well as sustainability (Obeidat et al., 2016). The complementarity between Innovation and KM is highlighted in the definition given by Obeidat et al. (2016) where innovation is regarded as “new knowledge creation for an organization”. Additionally, Ahbabi et al. (2019) investigates the relationship between KM and Innovation and underline that the implementation of KM-processes has a positive impact on quality, innovation and performance in public organizations.

Considering that public organizations are characterized by numerous knowledge intensive activities, there is, therefore, a need for effective KM Best Practices implementation in order to develop innovative services. The capability though of innovation development depends both on inner and outer knowledge management (Della Peruta et al., 2014). This implies that investigation of context plays a significant role in the relationship between KM and Innovation in public sector, which as Della Peruta et al. (2014) state is poorly discussed in literature. Furthermore, as highlighted by reviewing the literature there is a research gap which focuses on the lack of studies regarding the:

- investigation of the relationship between Knowledge Management (KM) and innovation in public sector
- High Performance Organizations – HPO investigation as a contextual factor which affects KM practices and innovation in public sector
- holistic investigation of the relationship among KM, innovation, & HPO in Greek public sector

Thus, the aim of this research is to investigate the relationship among HPO, KM Best Practices, and Innovation in Greek public sector.

Hypotheses development

Drawing on the abovementioned synoptic literature review in the introductory section, our research hypotheses are:

H1: KM Best Practices have a positive and significant relationship with Innovation  
H2: HPO has a positive and significant relationship with Innovation  
H3: HPO has a positive and significant relationship with KM Best Practices  
H4: HPO has a positive and significant relationship with Innovation through the mediation role of KM Best Practices
Purpose and Methodology
This research aims to investigate the relationship among HPO, KM Best Practices, and Innovation in a Greek public sector context. Specifically, we focused on the context of Greek public organizations which use performance management methods, and thus could be regarded as HPOs. We employed a quantitative case study methodology and developed a structured on-line questionnaire with a 5-degree Likert scale (1: I strongly disagree-5: I strongly agree) which we tested with the PLS-SEM method. The questionnaire’s structure is the following:

- 35 questions for “HPO” (Yadav & Waal, 2020) that refer to MQ (Management Quality), OAO (Openness and action orientation), LTO (Long-term orientation), CI (Continuous Improvement), and EQ (Employee Quality).
- 20 questions for “KM Best Practices” (Xanthopoulou et al., 2021; Teixeira et al., 2020, Yurs et al., 2016; Al Ahabi et al., 2017) that refer to KM Best Practices at each KM sub-process: KA (Knowledge Application), KS (Knowledge Storage), KD (Knowledge Dissemination), KC (Knowledge Creation), and
- 15 questions for “Innovation” (Mafabi et al., 2012) that refer to SI (Structural Innovation), PI (Process Innovation), and CI (Competence Innovation).

The above mentioned questionnaire was delivered to 621 Greek public sector organizations that use performance management tools and we collected 270 full responses (a 43.48% response rate).
To analyze the data, we used the “Smart PLS” software for the assessment of the structural model, and tested the hypotheses by means of partial least squares (PLS) structural equation modelling (SEM) (Ringle et al., 2014). PLS-SEM gained increased popularity over the years in social sciences (Hair et al., 2018) and recently on KM research (see Sahibzada et al, 2020; Sharic et al., 2019; Maheshwari et al., 2021; Kashyar and Agraway, 2020; Berriazes and Abidine, 2019; Zhang and Wang, 2021; Kineber et al., 2021; Rezaei et al., 2017; 2018). We selected the PLS-SEM because it has several advantages when compared to the traditional covariance-based SEM techniques. For example, there are not distributional assumptions of normality, while it can be used to analyze data from small samples. In addition, PLS-SEM incorporates both formative and reflective constructs and hierarchical component models (HCMs). HCMs gives us the chance to reduce the number of relationships in the structural model, making the PLS path model more parsimonious and easier to grasp (Hair et al., 2014, p. 229). In our structural model, HPO, KM Best Practices, and Innovation were operationalized as “reflective-formative” higher-order components. The hierarchical component measurement model was created by using the “repeated indicators approach” combined with the “two-step approach” (see Hair et al., 2014, pp. 230-233; Lowry and Gaskin, 2014, p. 135).

For reflective indicators, convergent validity and reliability were estimated with the use of AVE, Cronbach α and composite reliability (CR) (Hair et al., 2014). For discriminant validity we used the “Fornell-Lacker”, and the “Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio” (HTMT<0.85 or 0.9) criteria.

For formative indicators (HPO, KM Best Practices, and Innovation) we examined the “multicollinearity” by the “Variance Inflation Factors” (VIF) (Cenfetelli and Basselier, 2009) (VIF<3.33 or 5.0).
Finally, the bootstrapping procedure was applied (5000 randomly drawn samples) for the structural model analysis and hypotheses testing.

Furthermore, we used the Stone-Geisser Q-square test for the predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2017: 167) of the quality of the structural model. For the Stone-Geisser Q-square test, two separate analyses with 7 and 25 omission distances were undertaken (blindfolding technique in SmartPLS) to test the stability of the findings (Q-squares > 0). Aligning with Mihail & Kloutsiniotis (2016), we chose not to include the goodness of fit (GoF) as a criterion for PLS-SEM, because it is believed that it is not able to separate valid models from invalid ones, while it is not applicable to formative measurement models (Hair et al., 2017: 185; Henseler & Sarstedt, 2012: 577).

Findings
Firstly, the conceptual model is depicted in Figure 1.
Secondly, the result of the two-step approach appears in Figure 2.

Additionally, discriminant validity was achieved as show in Table 1 (Fornell-Lacker criterion) and Table 2 (HTMT criterion).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Fornell-Larcker Criterion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fornell-Larcker Criterion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hpo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0,902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hpo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0,833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0,895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0,804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0,931</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KM hpo innovation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hpo</td>
<td>0.894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>innovation</td>
<td>0.845 0.861</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As observed in Table 3, Cronbach α, AVE and CR scores were in the acceptable level (Cronbach α>0.7, AVE>0.5, CR>0.7).

Table 3: Convergent Validity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
<th>rho_A</th>
<th>Composite Reliability</th>
<th>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KM</td>
<td>0.924</td>
<td>0.926</td>
<td>0.946</td>
<td>0.814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hpo</td>
<td>0.938</td>
<td>0.938</td>
<td>0.953</td>
<td>0.801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>innovation</td>
<td>0.923</td>
<td>0.928</td>
<td>0.951</td>
<td>0.866</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the separate analyses with 7 and 25 omission distances (blindfolding technique in SmartPLS) the values were stable for both omission distances and two out of three of the $Q^2$ were greater than zero (0.559 and 0.585), and the $Q^2$ of HPO construct is zero which is in the limit of the acceptable values (see Table 4). Thus, there is evidence that the model was stable and the predictive relevance requirement was satisfied.

Table 4: Quality assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SSO</th>
<th>SSE</th>
<th>$Q^2$ (=1-SSE/SSO)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KM</td>
<td>1080,000475,958</td>
<td>0.559</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hpo</td>
<td>1350,0001350,000</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The result of the VIF estimation is acceptable while VIF<3.33 or 5.00 (Hair et al., 2018).

Finally, Table 5 presents the results of the hypotheses testing, as follow:

### Table 5: Hypotheses testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Sample (O)</th>
<th>Sample Mean (M)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</th>
<th>T Statistics (O/STDEV)</th>
<th>P Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hpo -&gt; KM -&gt; Innovation</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>0.315</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td>6.396</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KM -&gt; Innovation</td>
<td>0.377</td>
<td>0.377</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td>9.522</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hpo -&gt; KM</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>42.379</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hpo -&gt; Innovation</td>
<td>0.804</td>
<td>0.804</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>29.918</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the structural model analysis, the bootstrapping procedure was applied (5000 randomly drawn samples) (Table 5). Table 5 presents that KM Best Practices (β=0.377, p<0.001) is positively and significantly related to Innovation, HPO (β=0.804, p<0.001) is positively and significantly related to Innovation, and KM Best Practices (β=0.314, p<0.001) is positively and significantly related to KM Best Practices. Thus, these findings support our hypotheses (H1, H2, and H3). In addition, H4 is supported because HPO has a positive and significant relationship with Innovation through the mediation role of KM Best Practices.

### Conclusion

Finally, KM Best Practices operated as a mechanism for innovation development in the relationship between HPO and Innovation in Greek public sector. Overall, the results are important for practitioners and policymakers for incorporating KM best practices in their strategy which could lead to the development of innovations and performance improvement. In addition, it is remarkable that this research provides novel theoretical insights as it is the first time that the relationship among HPO, KM practices and Innovation, is investigated in the public sector. However, the study has some limitations. The main limitation of this study is the limited number of respondents that were surveyed and therefore needs to be validated with a larger number of samples to increase its generalizability. The other limitation of this study is the fact that data were collected only from Greek public sector organizations. Therefore our findings were restricted to a particular geographical context. Since the respondents in this study were from Greece, their responses might have been influenced by the cultural, organisational and professional environment of that location as compared to other public organisations around the world. Further research with increased participation from more public sector organisations around the word is required to enhance the validity and generalizability of the findings and tease out more managerially relevant implications.

### Acknowledgment

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First-year sales students' discontent and their suggestions for improvement: A qualitative investigation based on cognitive dissonance theory

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Abstract:
This qualitative study examines the causes of disappointment/dissatisfaction among first-year students at a public university with their chosen course of study and collects recommendations from students to achieve higher satisfaction. Based on the theoretical ground of cognitive dissonance theory, this study is exploratory in nature and follows the paradigm of interpretivism. It seeks to understand the world through the direct experience of a phenomenon in its context. Sixty-six students at an Austrian public university were asked to write an essay about their experiences at their new university and to suggest ways to escape the uncomfortable feeling that arises from the question: "Did I make the right decision in choosing my university?"
Using thematic content analysis (TCA), 800 codes related to the reasons for cognitive dissonance as well as the approaches to achieving satisfaction were identified and classified into content categories. The most important reasons for disappointment were a discrepancy between expectations and delivery at the level of course content and organization, personal reasons, the availability of attractive alternatives, and lack of feedback on complaints and concerns. As remedies, students suggested a realistic relationship between promise and delivery; honest information prior to enrolment; improved feedback systems; better maintained relationships, networks, and communities; and success stories through trusted testimonials. Program leaders should actively listen, lower the barriers in their relationships with students, better motivate and inform students about expectations, and overall create a "better connection" with students. Faculty can help reduce uncertainty and dissatisfaction by building good relationships with students, providing feedback, and engaging in student communities.
The main contribution of this study is to add both a descriptive and a prescriptive dimension to the existing knowledge of cognitive dissonance theory and marketing for public non-profit organizations. From a methodological perspective, this work expands the scope of qualitative research in the study of cognitive dissonance as well as in the application of predictive analysis with qualitative methods.

Keywords: qualitative research, interpretivism, cognitive dissonance theory, high-credence services, higher education marketing, non-profit marketing.

Introduction
A prospective student's decision about his or her future college or university is complex and risky: an ever-increasing range of study options (Knight, 2008), ongoing changes in the global educational landscape (Roese & Summerville, 2005), increasingly facilitated global mobility, standardization yet differentiation of offerings, and the prospect of significant investment and perhaps even years of debt (Angulo-Ruiz, Pergelova, Cheben, & Angulo-Altamirano, 2016) significantly complicate a future student's decision. Many newly enrolled students experience unpleasant mental states when weighing the decision they have made and the (perhaps) more attractive alternatives that have eluded them. This can lead to dissatisfaction, regret, negative word of mouth to others, and ultimately increasing dropout rates. In general terms, the theory of cognitive dissonance addresses this problem of "agony of choice" and the associated uncertainty about decisions made.
Since its conceptualization by Festinger (1957), the construct of cognitive dissonance (CD) and related concepts have been explored in many contexts related to consumer decision making and processing (Cummings & Venkatesan, 1976; Hoshino-Browne et al., 2005; Ong, Frewer, & Chan, 2017). Fewer contributions exist on CD in the context of commercial or social services (Bawa & Kansal, 2008; Burke, Schmidt, Wagner, Hoffman, & Hanlon, 2017; Kim, 2011). Among these, empirical work examining CD in higher education is particularly rare. This paper examines causes of student dissatisfaction and ways to reduce it. In addition, the role of faculty, administration, and program leadership in creating and reducing CD is considered. Interpretivism was the overarching research paradigm of this study. Qualitative research was chosen as a method to understand the
Cognitive dissonance, dissatisfaction, and regret

Cognitive dissonance is a psychological state that is experienced as unpleasant by an individual when he/she has two or more inconsistent beliefs, ideas, or values at the same time (Festinger, 1962). Consequently, the individual is motivated to reduce this dissonance and he/she might try to make these conflicting beliefs more consistent. Cognitive dissonance and dissatisfaction are often used synonymously, but are two conceptually distinct psychological constructs (Sweeney, Soutar, & Johnson, 1996). Satisfaction/dissatisfaction involves the perceived difference between the customer’s expectations and the product’s or service’s performance (Mitchell & Boustani, 1994; Yi, 1990) whereas CD represents the mental challenge of having conflicting beliefs about how to solve a problem. Salzerberger and Koller (2010) propose that cognitive dissonance and dissatisfaction are complementary, but with different effects. Satisfaction affects the loyalty dimension, including purchase intention and word-of-mouth communication, while cognitive dissonance tends to affect consumer complaint behaviour. Also, CD and regret are related constructs. Regret is based on a comparison between the chosen action and what could have been another choice (Bell, 1982; Gabillon, 2020). According to Brehm and Wicklund (1970), regret is a consequence of cognitive dissonance. Unresolved CD creates dissatisfaction and leads to motivation to reduce it. Various dissonance reduction strategies have been researched in psychology and marketing (Jarcho, Berkman, & Lieberman, 2011; McGrath, 2017). Individuals may use attitude change, selective exposure, or the spread of word of mouth. Understanding the phenomenon of CD becomes more important as customers become more empowered and have more access to information (e.g. through the evolution of the internet and social media). Such circumstances increase involvement and raise expectations of the product or service in question (Soutar & Sweeney, 2003).

Student decision making and cognitive dissonance

The main conditions for CD also apply to higher education decisions (Sweeney, Hausknecht, & Soutar, 2000): To start with, the decision matters to the individual in that it involves significant financial or psychological costs. This is especially true for higher education, which requires significant financial investment and commitment (Le, Robinson, & Dobele, 2020). Furthermore, the respective decision must be significant for the individual. A student's choice about what and where to study is a life-changing career-related decision (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Third, the individual has the freedom to choose among alternatives. Due to the large number of universities, simplified mobility, and largely standardized admission requirements, students have a range of options from which to choose freely (Lemoine, Jenkins, & Richardson, 2017). Finally, the decision is difficult to reverse. Although a student's decision to enrol in a particular program is not per se irreversible, it would be time-consuming and costly to reverse it. As with most business decisions, also those based primarily on rational reasoning and evaluation, emotional components play a role (Zehetner, Engelhardt-Nowitzki, Hengstberger, & Kraigher-Krainer, 2012). Although CD is more likely to respond to the cognitive component of the decision made, certain non-rational elements of the decision cannot be excluded in the discussion of CD. There is a paucity of literature on students' university choices and their relationship to cognitive dissonance. For example, Wiese (1994) argues that a student’s perception of whether the selected university will fit his or her expectations is an important decisive factor. Belanger et al. (2002) found that there can be large differences between expectations of a university and the actual delivery of education on several attributes - leading to post-purchase cognitive dissonance. Martin and Adrian (2004) examined longitudinal effects of CD on perceived service quality of first-year students at an orientation stage while Mao and Oppewal (2010) analysed effects of post-purchase information on students' CD, and Callender and Jackson (2008) discussed monetary constraints as drivers of CD in students' college choice behaviour.

As they are mostly left alone with their mental discomfort in the first phase of their studies, students try to reduce their CD: Those who are satisfied might spread positive word-of-mouth, which is increasingly important for recruiting in a globally connected world under uncertainty. Students who are not satisfied, on the other hand, could circulate negative word of mouth. This is critical for other prospective students who seek information and guidance before deciding. From a university marketing perspective, this is not a trivial problem. As in many business-to-business constellations, universities create lead funnels to recruit potential students. Prospects, leads, and ultimately enrolled and matriculated customers (i.e., students) must be identified from a large set of possible suspects (Stadlmann & Zehetner, 2021). During this process, potential students contact existing ones to learn
about and get a feel for the institution in question. Disappointed students or those suffering from cognitive dissonance will most likely not be strong advocates for a particular institution. This may deter potential students and cause them to make a different choice. Therefore, the authors of this study look for reasons for student CD in the early months of studies and ways to reduce it.

Research Method
The need for a complex, detailed understanding of the phenomenon of freshman CD suggests the use of qualitative research methods (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). The authors seek to “discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, people's perspectives and worldviews” (Merriam, 1988, p. 6). An inductive research approach was adopted, beginning with the formulation of guiding research questions and the collection and analysis of qualitative data. Thematic content analysis (TCA) was used to analyse the data (Mayring, 2015; Schreier, 2012). Using a phenomenological approach, thematic categories were identified and codes were assigned to them (Kuckartz, 2016). These were grouped into themes and subthemes. The results are reflected with the existing literature on CD in related fields. Finally, conclusions and implications for the academic community as well as practitioners in higher education marketing are presented.

Guiding research paradigm and research questions
This study is exploratory in nature. It draws on both descriptive and prescriptive analyses to provide answers to the questions “what is happening” and “what should be done” (Lepenioti, Bousdekis, Apostolou, & Mentzas, 2020). First, the divergence of expectations and experiences of first-year students was examined. The guiding research question was: “What are causes of students' experience of cognitive dissonance in their first months of studies?”. This led to a better insight into how first-year students align their expectations with their first experiences and which factors led to negative disconfirmation.
Second, a prescriptive approach is used to answer the question of what actions should be taken to move from a negative to a positive relationship between expectations and performance. The research question was: “What do first-year students recommend to free themselves and others from the mental discomfort caused by cognitive dissonance?” There are several suggestions in the literature on how to establish or increase post-purchase satisfaction. Elliot and Devine (1994) suggested sending messages specifically aimed at validating consumers' decisions by “praising their wisdom” (p. 383); offering stronger guarantees or warranties; or improving service. Maxwell-Stuart et al. (2018) stated that student participation in program activities and support services play an important role in improving student satisfaction. As in a high-credence service like higher education consumption is inseparable from the provider of the service, the third research question was: “What role do faculty, program directors, and administrators play in reducing cognitive dissonance among students?” This paper presents students' authentic perspective and first-hand suggestions for reducing CD.

Data collection and triangulation
The purpose of the data collection was to obtain retrospective and real-time statements from students experiencing the phenomenon of CD. Sixty-six first-year graduate business students at a European university were primed with the theory of cognitive dissonance and way to reduce it. Later, they were asked to write an essay describing their feelings about their first months at the university and the related causes of what they perceive as cognitive dissonance. Next, they suggested ideas about how they would feel better and how their dissonance could be lowered or eliminated. Third, they discussed the role of their instructors and program director in terms of how they could help reduce CD. The students' elaborations were collected and prepared for thematic content analysis.

As a validation strategy, the term "triangulation" in the social sciences refers to considering a research question from (at least) two different perspectives (Flick, 2004). In this study, data triangulation and researcher triangulation were used. Data triangulation was achieved by collecting data not only from different cohorts (full-time and part-time students), but also from different years of study (freshmen of the 2020/21 academic year and freshmen of the 2021/22 academic year participated) to reduce artifacts due to group effects. Researcher triangulation was used by having two observers with equal influence review, group, and analyse the data to balance the subjective influences of individuals (Denzin, 2017).

Data analysis
A six-stage thematic content analysis was conducted because it allows for the capture of themes related to the problem as well as the isolation of patterned responses or meanings (Cooper et al., 2012). In Phase 1, the authors familiarized themselves with the data by studying the transcripts of the 66 participants. Initial coding (Phase 2) resulted in the generation of 800 codes from the entire data set. Subsequently, the codes were assigned to potential themes (Phase 3). All coded data were classified into themes and overarching themes were formed. In Phase 4, themes were reviewed, refined, and in some cases further subdivided into subthemes. In Phase 5, the
identified themes were given meaningful names and the report (Phase 6) was produced. MAXQDA (2020) was used for data analysis.

**Findings**

Consistent with the research questions, the causes of dissonance were presented, followed by respondents' suggestions for reducing dissonance, and concluding with findings about the role of instructors, administration and programme management in reducing CD. For a better understanding of the findings, selected quotes from the transcripts are presented. Those are italicized and coded with the initials of the respective respondent.

Discrepancy between promise and performance is a key driver of CD, caused by inflated expectations and inadequate performance. Positive reinforcement of the decision through vivid presentation of tangibles or by rewarding participant engagement and performance helps reduce CD. Involving participants in intra-group communication and providing regular feedback psychologically increases the attractiveness of the chosen alternative or decreases the attractiveness of the rejected alternative. The qualities of professors and program leaders to listen and motivate are more important than to manage and control the program. Well instructed and trained, faculty and staff can reduce students' psychological discomfort - as role models, discussants, or simply "godparents." The following section discusses the key findings in more detail.

**Causes of cognitive dissonance in the first months of study**

Reducing inconsistencies between expectation and confirmation is a prerequisite for creating satisfaction and loyalty (Hausknecht, Sweeney, Soutar, & Johnson, 1998). In the present study, several causes of such inconsistencies were uncovered: dissatisfaction due to expectation-disconfirmation, negative peer feedback, and a general regret about the decision made. Dissatisfaction with the content of studies was a main reason for perceived CD. According to expectation-confirmation theory (Oliver, 1980), dissatisfaction results from a mismatch between expectations and delivery. Sweeney et al. (2000) describe dissatisfaction caused by a discrepancy between expectation and reality as a major driver of CD. In this study, dissatisfaction was reported in the following areas: Program content, style and format of content delivery, and program organization. Content dissatisfaction was caused by the delivery of content other than that expected (OB: 'I expected a sales and marketing focus, but the first two semesters are very much into mechatronics'), (SS: 'the study program is covering too many basic economic courses and theoretical business topics'), too much workload (JN: 'Program turned out to be harder than expected'), UF: 'Lots of additional work that is not included in the study guide'), or inflexibility in service consumption (SS: 'my expectation was to have a flexible schedule'). The organizational problems mentioned were the lack of support from the administration ('LS: 'Slow response from the office'; FZ: 'Lack of support to find internships'), and a feedback policy that was insufficient for students (MK: 'I did not receive a complete disclosure of my grades and feedback').

Another source of CD was conflicting peer feedback from other students or friends. Matz and Wood (2005) found CD to be a group phenomenon. In the present study, positive feedback from friends about their experiences in choosing another institution led to CD (BT: 'Hearing about other study programs that might have been a possible alternative oftentimes leads students to doubt whether they made the right decision'; LF: 'I heard (form a friend) that elsewhere a study program is really nice'). Negative feedback from others about one's choice also led to CD (ME: 'experiencing negative feedback on one's own chosen path').

Regret about having made the wrong choice was the third factor extracted from the data. Generally, regret is based on a comparison between the action chosen and what could have been another choice (Bell, 1982; Gabillon, 2020). In the present study, regret was expressed about the irreversibility of the decision made (BK: 'I am stuck and cannot change my decision anymore'), or by missed opportunities (e.g. to find a job and earn money). This is consistent with Brehm’s (1956) free-choice paradigm, which states that CD occurs because the chosen alternative can never be perfect and the missed alternative is now unavailable. Other respondents regretted that they had not gathered enough information about the program or had received conflicting information from different sources that they had not carefully considered (MK: 'Was not certain what I really want'). A few students regretted that they discovered attractive alternative options too late.

**Suggestions to reduce cognitive dissonance**

In line with the phenomenological approach adopted for this study, respondents were also asked to suggest remedies and antidotes to reduce their dissonance. Based on their suggestions, four key themes were extracted: Avoiding misleading or incomplete pre-decision information, providing feedback, cultivating relationships and communication, and circulating more objective data, success stories, and testimonials among the students. Avoiding missing or misleading information in the university's pre-decision-making process was the top suggestion. This is consistent with McClung and Werner (2008), who cautioned against misleading pre-purchase information from a value-based approach: "Worst-case scenarios for any university are to overpromise and underperform. One can find evidence of this form of value virus [...] at any institution where there are low retention rates" (p. 111). Respondents in the present study suggested providing honest, realistic, and clear
information to create the right expectations that can be met during study (EM: ‘Advertising the program while creating realistic expectations is probably their most important task’).

Feedback frequency and quality of feedback systems was another theme to reduce CD. Respondents suggested improvements in terms of the system (FZ: ‘The university should create a feedback tool not only in regard to the courses but also in regard to the application process’), the method (SL: ‘Establish face-to-face feedback sessions between students and professors’), the frequency (BS: ‘Collect information from the students not only in online evaluations, but also after classes’) and the communication of feedback (SB: ‘The university feedback system should be public, so students can see how former students were satisfied’).

The third theme was about relationships, networks, and community among students. Respondents suggested better networking with existing students (MM: ‘Link freshmen to successful students of previous years to show what could be achieved’; SL: ‘Organize meetings with older semester students to discuss the semester abroad’), but also with faculty and staff (EO: ‘ask us for contribution to have a stake in the study program’). These statements are consistent with Schewe’s (1973) strategy of reducing CD ‘by seeking the social support of others who already agree with the cognition the person wishes to maintain’ (p. 36).

Finally, respondents suggested increasing communication about the competitive rank of the university, success stories, and testimonials. This is again consistent with Schewe’s (1973) argument that individuals suffering from dissonance try to find information that is consistent with existing cognitions. For example, students suggested: (FZ: ‘[…] to post success stories and self-created content by students [...] to paint a realistic picture of the programme – e.g. student movies of their day at the university’). Respondents also recommended featuring testimonials from successful graduates (EM: ‘have former students posing as a living proof of where the study program can get you’). In addition, tangible elements such as case studies of successful projects with companies were cited as elements to reduce CD. Finally, improved promotion of rankings as a tangible and credible element of evaluating the university’s quality was suggested (MM: ‘Link your channels to information about the program such as rankings, certifications, competitions, articles’).

Role of the programme director and the faculty members

In this study, the program director and faculty are viewed as service providers. To help reduce CD, the program director should build a better personal relationship, make more personal contact, break down barriers (FL: ‘make sure students can come and talk to the director in case of a problem ’), motivate students (DJ: ‘The head of the program can encourage the students by providing option/solutions or presenting similar cases from former students’; MM: ‘The director needs to tell them what they have achieved and what their potential is’), and be an active listener (JD: ‘Active listening to feedback from students is crucial’). The role of instructors (professors, lecturers) in reducing CD was mainly related to motivation, discussion, feedback, relationship, and trust (TJ: ‘The professor is the first contact for the student. He/she should engage and try to understand their needs and pain’; SB: ‘professors may create a discussion on how students like the contents, and if their expectations were met’).

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to apply the theory of cognitive dissonance in higher education and public/not-for-profit marketing. While some of the results are consistent with conceptual or empirical evidence from other areas, such as consumer goods and services, there are differences that can be attributed to the context of higher education and university studies. First, the discrepancy between promise and performance seems to be a major driver of CDs in higher education. Arousing excessive expectations, followed by insufficient fulfilment, leads to dissatisfaction. University marketers need to know the content of the programmes they advertise and communicate in a way that reflects reality.

Second, a positive confirmation of the decision made can also reduce students’ CD. The usefulness of higher education is, by its very nature, not evident during study. Therefore, students try to find information and references that confirm their decision positively (Jean Tsang, 2019). Positive confirmation can be achieved by clearly demonstrating material assets, or by providing credible outlook especially in the first phase of the study programme, or by rewarding students for their commitment and achievements to date. Third, the provision of communication opportunities among students and the encouragement of low-threshold student feedback psychologically increases the attractiveness of the chosen alternative or psychologically reduces the attractiveness of the rejected alternative (Schewe, 1973). Based on the function of social and group support to reduce CD (McKinnie et al., 2003), CD can be reduced by building good relationships between new and existing students. Regular feedback sessions with groups or individuals help to identify and deal with discrepant statements within the cohort. Forth, one of the dissonance reduction strategies of individuals is to search for confirming information about their choice after purchase (Donnelly Jr & Ivancevich, 1970). Supporting the decision with confirmatory material also helps to reduce regrets, as it justifies the decision and helps to abandon the potential alternative (M’Barek & Gharbi, 2012). Such confirmatory material may include current examples from the university’s collaboration with companies, current research results, but also reports from successful
graduates. Finally, the issue of the inseparability of service and service provider (i.e., teaching and teacher), which is one of the main characteristics of service marketing (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1985), was also found in this study. The role of university staff is particularly important (i.e., programme director, faculty members, administrative staff). The qualities of listening and motivating are more important than the management of the service consumption. Good training and instruction of university staff, including in dealing with unsure or dissatisfied students, can reduce the psychological discomfort of their clients. The role as discussion partners or simply “godparents” is particularly important.

**Key Contributions**

For the academic community, this study provides current insights into CD in a rapidly changing higher education environment. The relationship of satisfaction/dissatisfaction, CD, regret, and service encounter in teaching and learning was discussed and underscored by the findings. The role of honest and realistic marketing and advertising in creating and/or reducing CD was also highlighted. The inseparability of service and service provider as the main variable was confirmed in its importance for CD reduction. For qualitative marketing research theory, this study expands the scope to include the special case of studying cognitive dissonance using qualitative methods. This study can also serve as an example for the field of predictive analytics using qualitative-exploratory methods.

For the domain of qualitative market research, the paper provides an evidence-based case of how cognitive dissonance can be investigated using qualitative-exploratory methods and how descriptive and prescriptive elements can be examined within the qualitative methods spectrum.

For marketers in higher education, the findings suggest the need to address the trap of over-promise and under-deliver that is continually attempted in an increasingly competitive environment. The important role of service providers (faculty, administrators, program directors) was also mentioned.

Ultimately, the subject of the study was a public university that is a non-profit institution. For non-profit marketing in general, the study underscores that student expectations are high, although the argument that high tuition fees also raise expectations is not as relevant for non-profits organisations. A realistic relationship between promise and performance is also essential for non-profits organizations.

**Limitations and future research**

This study used a qualitative approach to better understand the causes and remedies for CD in the field of everyday university student life. With a qualitative approach, it is of course possible to discuss reliability, validity, transferability, and generalizability. Based on these findings, other research methods can be used to carry out further investigations that can also be applied to different contextual contexts. In addition, the study was conducted over the period of two years, but only at one university. Each university has its own specific personality, which naturally flows into the results of such a study. A replication of the study at other universities could sharpen the picture of the causes and remedial measures for CD. Finally, the study was carried out in 2020, a so-called ‘COVID year’. Since there is first evidence that the pandemic has influenced purchasing behaviour in general (Schuller, Bey, Grabe, & Schmitz, 2021; Sheth, 2020), it can be assumed that this also has an impact on the perceived CD of students in this particular context. Although the study was conducted during a period of mainly normal classroom teaching, more specific research about the impact of the pandemic on the concept of cognitive dissonance is useful for both theory development and non-academic actors.

**References**


Hellenic Banks’ CSR in Culture and its evaluation by the public

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Abstract:

Nowadays, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) actions in culture are becoming very popular among institutions and is believed that they have a strong, positive impact on the companies’ relationships development with their publics. The purpose of the paper is to highlight the CSR initiatives in culture of the Greek banks and evaluate its impact on public attitude towards them. The methods used were two: (a) a content analysis on banks’ websites to record their CSR actions in culture, and (b) a structured questionnaire to investigate the way public perceive them. The findings of this study reveal that although the Hellenic banks heavily invest in the CSR actions in culture, these actions have limited positive impact on the public’s attitude towards them.

Keywords: CSR, Culture, Banks, Greece, Public, Attitude

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, corporate support in culture has been established as a popular CSR practice for banking institutions worldwide (Truscott et al., 2009). According to the literature, this category of actions generally not only help promoting arts and culture in a society, but also has a positive effectiveness on the corporate reputation (Hur et al., 2014), image (McDonald and Lai, 2011) and value (Wu and Shen, 2013; Chih et al., 2010). The investments in alternative relationship development programs, such as these CSR initiatives, can give to a bank an excellent opportunity to differentiate from its competitors and enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty (Flavián et al., 2005; Raza et al., 2020).

It is interesting however to explore whether this effectiveness remains high for institutions that are already facing image issues. The Greek banks could be such a case. Due to the country’s extended economic crisis and their harsh marketing policies, these institutions have been undergone a severe damage on their reputation and diminish the public trust towards them (Kotzaivazogloy and Mavridis, 2012). At the same time, however, it seems that they are investing heavily on CSR actions including culture.

The purpose of this paper is twofold: (a) to highlight the CSR actions in culture undertaken by the Greek banks and (b) to assess their impact on public attitude towards banking institutions. The paper continues with a short review of the relevant literature, the research questions and the methodology used. The presentation of the findings and a discussion with previous studies upon them are following. It finishes with the conclusions, the limitations of the research and suggestions for further research.
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Socially responsible banking is a well-established concept in the financial industry (Scholtens, 2008) and is selected as a public relations tool for creating and maintaining long-term customer relationships and value creation (Khan et al., 2015; Shah and Khan, 2019). Furthermore, nowadays, customers seem to respond to a more personal approach in communication. However, the standardization of the products offered and the low degree of differentiation among banking institutions complicate their marketing efforts. In addition, traditional promotional tools, such as mass advertising, have lost much of their effectiveness (Cuesta Valiño et al., 2019) and new ones seem to emerge. A shift in investing in alternative relationships development strategies (Shah and Khan, 2019) are followed, such as CSR actions, sponsorships, events and experiential marketing activities (Jensen, 2017) in order the banks to meet people’s contemporary needs for sharing social experiences or interaction and create emotional bonds between companies and their public (O'Hagan and Harvey, 2000). Sponsoring of arts and culture are among the most popular marketing techniques used by these institutions (Shah and Khan, 2019; Jensen, 2017).

Studies show that CSR actions are positively related to a number of relational (Mandhachitara and Poolthong, 2011; Matute Vallejo et al., 2011) and economic results (Wu and Shen, 2013; Chih et al., 2010). When an entity adjusts its financial objectives to the interests of its stakeholders, it promotes win-win situations. Organizations that adopt successful CSR initiatives become credible and enjoy a good corporate reputation (Hsu, 2012; Hur et al., 2014; Campa et al., 2019). They also achieve a high degree of customer satisfaction and loyalty, which are the basis for maintaining the company's competitiveness and long-term viability (Carroll and Shabana, 2010).

Two important prerequisites for a successful CSR strategy are, among others, the investment in high quality actions that respond to the concerns of the focusing target groups (Fatma and Rahman, 2016; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006), as well as the good promotion of these actions (Öberseder et al., 2011). Research showed that customers are unaware of CSR issues, mainly because they are not informed (Pomering and Dolnicar, 2009). Thus, high quality CSR strategies may fail to improve the company's image and have a positive impact on the attitude and behavior of their publics (Öberseder et al. 2011).

Despite the extended literature on CSR initiatives in the financial industry, there seems to be a research gap –at least according to authors’ knowledge- not only in Greek banking institutions’ CSR actions in culture, but also in the degree of the acceptance from their publics. However, this field seems to be among the most popular since the banks, worldwide as well as in Greece, heavily invest in it. The present study tries to fill this gap by presenting the Hellenic banks’ CSR actions in culture and evaluating their impact on their publics.

3. RESEARCH PURPOSE, QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is twofold: (a) to record the CSR actions in culture undertaken by the Greek banks and (b) to assess their impact on public attitude towards them. Therefore, it aspires to answer the following questions: (a) what CSR actions in culture do the Hellenic banks follow and (b) how does the public evaluate them.

The research was conducted in two parts. The first one tried to record the CSR actions undertaken by all four systemic Greek banks, namely National Bank of Greece SA, Piraeus Bank SA, Eurobank SA and Alpha Bank, as well as the Bank of Greece. The data was selected using content analysis on the bank’s official websites. The second part explored the impact of these actions on customer loyalty. For this reason, a questionnaire with a five-point Likert-type scale was constructed based on relevant studies. The questions that investigate public’s attitude towards the banks’ CSR actions was based on Dalakas’ (2009) questionnaire, whereas the questions that examine the customer loyalty on the research of Fatma et al. (2016) and Pérez and del Bosque (2017). The sample was randomly chosen. This study was conducted on November 2021 through the Google forms and a total of 232 valid questionnaires were selected. The Cronbach's alpha reliability test was conducted and showed a good internal consistency and reliability (0.79 for the attitude towards the sponsorships and 0.86 for customer loyalty). The data was processed using the SPSS 28 statistical program.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

As far as the first research question is concerned, the findings of the content analysis showed that the five Hellenic banks examined actively invest in culture and arts (see Table 1). More specifically, all of them organize, support and participate in cultural events or activities, such as musical, theatrical or opera performances as well as painting and sculpture events. Four out of five sponsor restorations of Greek
archaeological places, whereas three of them run their own museums, maintain historical archives, own significant art collections, sponsor or edit interesting publications in culture, support libraries, exhibitions as well as educational programs and courses. Two banks create and run cultural centers and support research projects in culture.

Table 1. CRS actions in culture undertaken by the Greek banks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>National Bank of Greece SA</th>
<th>Piraeus Bank SA</th>
<th>Eurobank SA</th>
<th>Alpha Bank</th>
<th>Bank of Greece</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Running their own museums</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owning historical archives</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running research projects in culture</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsoring/editing publications</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing educational programs and courses</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsoring cultural events</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsoring restorations of Greek archeological places</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running their own libraries</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in cultural events</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running their own cultural centers</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing/sponsoring exhibitions</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owning art collections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings concerning the second research question, i.e. how the public perceives the CSR actions in culture, are presented in Table 2. According to them, the 63.4% (mean 2.19) of the respondents generally agree that the CSR actions are necessary for the arts and culture to survive, although most of them believe that there are too many sponsorships in culture today (36.6%, mean 2.91) and the CSR actions in culture are commercializing arts and ruining art purity (43.9%, mean 3.22) or are just gimmicks to find customers (39.3%, mean 3.12).

Table 2. Public attitude towards sponsoring and the Hellenic banks’ CSR actions in culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Generally agree(^1)</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Generally disagree(^2)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are too many sponsorships in culture today</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CSR actions are commercializing arts and ruining art purity</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CSR actions in culture are necessary for the arts to survive</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CSR actions in culture are just gimmicks to find customers</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The banks’ CSR actions are useful for the arts and culture</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The banks are only after the customers’ money though their CSR actions in culture</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A cultural event can be improved by banks’ support 78.9% 11.6% 9.5% 1.91
I think favorably of the banks that support the arts and culture 64.2% 26.3% 9.5% 2.21
Customers who like arts and culture benefit from these CSR actions 56.0% 29.3% 14.6% 2.38
I perceive the banks that sponsor culture as good corporate citizens in the community 48.3% 37.9% 13.7% 2.53

Concerning the Greek banks CSR actions in particular, 74.1% (mean 1.98) of the respondents find them useful, 78.9% (mean 1.91) believe that they enhance cultural events and 64.2% (mean 2.21) think favorably of the banks that support the arts and culture, and only 34.5% (mean 3.0) support that the banks are only after the customers’ money through these actions. In general, the majority of the respondents (48.3%, mean 2.53) perceives the banks that sponsors culture as good corporate citizens in the community and believe (56.0%, mean 2.38) that the customers who like arts and culture benefit from these CSR actions.

As Table 3 shows, the majority of the respondents has a more or less neutral perception towards the quality of the banks’ CSR initiatives in culture and less than one third generally feels that actions reflect their interests.

Table 3. Perceptions towards the quality of banks’ CSR actions in culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSR actions in Culture are</th>
<th>Generally agree(^1)</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Generally disagree(^2)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Well organized</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High standard</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>47.0%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet my interests</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concerning customer loyalty, half (mean 2.46) of the respondents argue that as banks’ customers they will continue to see the institution that offers in culture as their main bank in the future, 57.3% (mean 2.39) of them would always think of it as their first option, 53% (mean 2.51) could say positive things about it and 48.7% (mean 2.61) would recommend it when asked for their advice. However, 45.3% (mean 3.32) of them would stop being a customer of it if another bank offers them better rates.

Table 4. Customer loyalty towards Greek banking institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Generally agree(^1)</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Generally disagree(^2)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I shall continue considering this one as my main bank in the next few years</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I need banking services, I always think of this bank as my first option</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would keep being a customer of this bank even if another entity offered better rates</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could say positive things about this bank</td>
<td>53.0%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I would recommend this bank as someone asked my advice 48.7% 32.8% 18.5% 2.61

1 It consists the sum of answers ‘completely agree’ and ‘relatively agree’
2 It consists the sum of answers ‘completely disagree’ and ‘relatively disagree’

In order to investigate the existence and level of the correlation between attitude and customer loyalty, a Pearson test was performed (Table 5). The results show that there is a statistically significant and low positive correlation between the examined variables (p-value: 0.439).

**Table 5.** Correlation test between attitude and loyalty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Loyalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.439**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Finally, linear regression is applied to model the relationship between the two variables and predict the value of loyalty (dependent variable) based on the value of attitude (independent variable).

**Table 6.** Linear regression analysis results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>β (Beta)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>8.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>7.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty

As indicated in Table 6, the linear regression show the customers’ loyalty depends partly on their attitude towards banking institutions’ CSR initiatives. An one-point improvement in attitude leads to an 0.44 point increase in loyalty. The coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.19$ proves that only 19% of the variance in customer loyalty is explained by the variance in customer attitude.

**5. DISCUSSION UPON FINDINGS**

This study showed that the five biggest Hellenic banks invest heavily in culture and adopt a variety of significant and high standard relevant CSR actions. This strategy seems to be in line with CSR strategies followed by other financial institutions worldwide (Scholtens, 2008). Responsible banking is used as a marketing tool, in which entertainment and participation in artistic events play a leading role in the overall mix. Investment in new, even experimental marketing activities has been probably chosen as an alternative strategy for establishing and maintaining relationships with the public. Collaboration between culture and financial institutions seems to be a co-marketing strategy that can lead to win-win situations for both parties (Lund and Greyser, 2019). From a bank’s perspective, bonds with stakeholders are strengthened, its public image is improved and its corporate recognition is connected with the co-creation of value with the customers (Lund and Greyser, 2019).

Concerning the impact of these actions to the public’s attitude towards the Greek banks, the research findings showed some interesting insights. Firstly, the public has a rather positive stance towards the Greek banks’ CSR actions in culture, a finding that is in line with previous research (e.g. Dalakas, 2009) that confirmed the positive attitude of the public towards sponsorships in general and artistic sponsorships in particular. Interestingly, a more positive attitude towards the banks’ CSR actions in culture was found compared to the average of other institutions that also invest in similar initiatives. This seems to be the result of the public’s acknowledge of the Greek banks’ significant contribution to the field.
Secondly, the impact of these actions on public attitude does not seem to be as effective as it would be expected according to the literature. Numerous studies have shown that CSR actions have a number of positive effects for the institutions. They improve public attitude towards an institution (Garcia de los Salmones et al., 2009) and increase customer loyalty (Matute Vallejo et al., 2011, Fatma et al., 2016), satisfaction (Ramlugun and Raboute, 2015) and faith (Mandhachitara and Poolthong, 2011). In addition, the high quality and innovative CSR actions lead to a higher public recognition, customer attraction and loyalty (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006, Costa and Menichini, 2013). This study, however, revealed that the Greek public has a neutral opinion towards the quality of these initiatives. Furthermore, the correlation between the public’s attitude towards CSR actions in culture and customer loyalty is low, when the members of the public act as banks’ customers.

This finding could be the result of three possible explanations. One of them could be the lack of an effective communication strategy. Several studies showed that awareness has a positive effect on customer attitude (Quester and Thompson, 2001; Pomering and Dolnicar, 2009). Öberseder et al. (2011) recommend easy access to information and the use of multiple and reliable media. Inefficient disclosure of CSR information leads to communication failure (Costa and Menichini, 2013) and low response rates of the public (Pérez and Rodríguez del Bosque, 2012). A second explanation could be that these actions do not reflect the interests of the majority of the public. Previous research (McDonald and Lai, 2011; Matute Vallejo et al., 2011; Costa and Menichini, 2013; Fatma and Rahman, 2016) found that the inconsistency between CSR actions and public interest could diminish their effectiveness. A third explanation, however, could be that these actions cannot overcome the bad image and the lower trust of the public towards the Greek banks as a result of the country’s extended economic crisis and their harsh marketing policies. It seems that the majority of respondents neither is convinced of the banks’ altruistic motives nor evaluates them as one of the most important factors in determining customer loyalty.

6. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to record the CSR actions in culture undertaken by the Hellenic banks and explore their impact on public attitude. The research showed that all the five biggest banks in Greece are following a CSR strategy that invest heavily in arts and culture with a variety of significant and high quality initiatives that rescue and promote of the intangible cultural heritage of the country, including sponsoring events and exhibitions, running museums, editing publications, maintaining historical archives, owning art collections and others.

The public seems to acknowledge the banks’ significant contribution in culture, having a rather positive attitude towards these actions; more positive compared to the average of other institutions that also invest in similar initiatives. However, this favorite perception is not enough to lead to customer loyalty. This study reveals that investing in CSR in culture is not enough on its own to ensure customer loyalty for an institution. In order to be even more effective, valuable CSR actions should be accompanied with an efficient communication strategy, public-oriented initiatives and an overall positive brand image.

Concerning the limitations of the present study, it is focused on the CSR actions in culture of the Hellenic banks. It did not explore the public’s attitude towards other institutions or CSR actions besides culture. It did not also research possible differentiations that may exist among people towards different CSR actions in culture, such as sponsoring, running museums, editing books in culture etc. or specific categories, such as theater, music, dance, visual arts etc. Further studies could investigate the impact of CSR actions in different groups of the public, the public’s reactions to specific CSR actions in culture or similarities and differences between banks and other institutions or between the Greek banks and their counterparts in different countries.

REFERENCES


Gig workers’ motivation and job satisfaction: the “Wolt” riders’ case study

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Abstract
Employee motivation and job satisfaction play a pivotal role in achieving the organizational goals. However, limited research has been conducted on how to apply them to non-traditional work environments and especially within the context of Gig economy. The aim of this paper is to identify the motivation factors and the level of job satisfaction of Gig economy workers. Moreover, the paper attempts to “draw” a profile of these workers and investigate what motivates them and whether they are satisfied from their occupancy. Based on organizational theories found in the literature, a quantitative research was performed in a sample of 183 Wolt drivers, in Thessaloniki, Greece. The findings reveal that the incentives that mostly motivate gig workers are flexibility and autonomy. As far as the job satisfaction is concerned, monetary rewards (payment), work-life balance and the ability to work with multiple businesses are identified as the main factors.

Keywords: motivation, job satisfaction, gig economy, food delivery, Wolt

1. Introduction
The Covid-19 pandemic outbreak overturned the existing trends in the workplace and the idea of “work-life balance”, the balance between personal and work life, is getting more attention. As employees are setting their “well-being” in the foreground, they seek prosperity in the workplace, accompanied by hybrid employment models, flexible hours and reduced working days. The new trend for flexible work, accompanied by factors such as the development of digital platforms and the new opportunities offered by the internet, contribute to the rapid expansion of the "gig economy".

Gig economy, alternative mentioned as sharing, on-demand, or online economy (Huws et al., 2019) refers to a form of self-employment and a short-term connection between employees, employers and customers (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016). Gig economy is also mentioned as platform economy, since the connection between global workforce and the jobs offered is made through on-line platforms and applications. Platform economy is the fastest developing form of employment in the world. According to European Commission (2021), more than 28 million people work through digital work platforms in Europe and their number is expected to reach 43 million people in 2025. Similar numbers are also observed in other countries and continents. In the UK, gig employees exceeded 1.1 million in 2017 (Balaram et al., 2017), while in the USA 16% of people aged 18-29 chose to work in a gig economy activity (Smith,2016). One of the most widely known examples of this employment model is the Finnish company named “Wolt”, which acts as a "mediator" between restaurants and food delivery drivers. According to the company’s website (Wolt, 2022), over 6,000 people are cooperating with the company, in 23 countries and in over 250 cities. These numbers demonstrate the explosive growth and the potential of the new "economy". However and according to Cant (2020:12) what matters is not the actual size of the workforce, but how the new form of employment will change its landscape and the economy in general.

The present paper attempts to explore the issue of gig economy and more specifically to identify the motivation and job satisfaction issues through an empirical research among Greek gig workers. In the beginning, a literature review is provided in order to understand the context and some details of the gig economy, especially concerning the main motivation and job satisfaction factors as identified by the relevant literature. Subsequently, the research methodology is presented and followed by the analysis of the results and the discussion upon them.
The paper ends with the main conclusions together with the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

2. Literature review

Gig economy is a phenomenon of the labor market of the current century which, however, according to Stanford (2017), presents a long series of historical “ancestors”, which can trace its appearance in the pre-capitalist period in Europe. The rapid growth of the gig economy as a form of employment was triggered by a combination of factors coming from both the demand and the supply side. In particular, these reasons lie in the inclusion of women in work, “feminization”, as Bosch (2004) calls it, especially with increasing part-time employment and service jobs, combined with regulatory developments in the labor and product markets, in reducing trade barriers, but also in the privatization of state assets.

It is defined as a type of short-term employment contract, the management of which is under a digital platform such as Amazon, Uber, Lyft, Rover (Kuhn, 2016). Traditionally, food delivery services, retail distributors, hospitality workers, and providers of travel services are included. Generally, employees individually offer their services either to organizations or to other individuals. However the platform, that acts as an intermediary, controls issues such as the means of production or the supply services and not individually each employee. In return, the gig employee (gig worker) acquires a customer base. In other words, in this process gig employee is responsible for delivering service to the customer, using a digital platform to mediate all parts of the circuit. The platform’s role can vary. In some cases, the platform exercises a degree of algorithmic control in processes such as pay or outsourcing. At Uber, for example, the platform is paired through an algorithm employee taxi driver and customer, based on the declared locations of both. The amount of payment is similarly decided by the digital site based on supply and demand. However, some platforms do not base their operation on existing algorithms, such as Amazon MTurk, where employees themselves can choose their tasks or the client from a range of options, which is true, and for their payment method, which on a case-by-case basis is chosen either by the customer either by the employee.

Another common characteristic of platforms is the use of rating systems by employees. Platform assigns the right to the client or the employer to grade the gig employee based on the experience gained by him, an element that has the power to influence the maintenance of the position in his job. In addition, the work incorporates feedback with customer feedback, through which employees are graded and included in the ranking. This implies a reputation rating, hence an expression of confidence in the employee, which in many cases is called as a “partner”. According to Gandini (2019), such a platform can perform the following functions: i) translates consumer demand into commands that employees-partners need to perform, ii) decides the types of tasks that partners have to perform, as well as the place and time, iii) decides (directly or indirectly) about the amount of money that each partner will receive for the tasks he/she has completed and iv) controls (directly or indirectly) the course of completion of the project assigned to the “partner”, as well as his/her performance.

The demographic profile of the partners, “giggers” as they are called, varies in terms of age group, race, educational background and skills, something that makes the holistic study of the new form of employment difficult. Moreover, it is quite difficult to specify the exact number of the participants because in some cases, the form of this employment is confused with other alternatives (Katz & Krueger, 2019).

As far as the partners are concerned, they are self-employed independent contractors. Each partner provides his/her work on the platform and is paid on a work-basis instead of its real working time. Due to the fact of the self-employment status, the company bypasses the employment rights that are covered by the employment scheme. Huws (2016) defines this new model as “platform capitalism”, where employees act as entrepreneurs through online platforms, while at the same time they are indirectly supervised by their contractors and expected to bring measurable outputs.

According to Webster (2016), the form of gig work includes extremely temporary contracts, which may refer to work assignments lasting a few hours, even minutes. In any case, upon the completion of the project assigned by an employer to a gig employee, the relationship between the two parties ends directly. The work in the gig economy varies depending on the assignment of tasks, the level of skills required for their completion and the working conditions. All this affects the place and manner of the fulfillment of the service. For example, Uber drivers have a constant social interaction with people, while Mechanical Turk employees who have no contact with people and work remotely through a computer.

The key element between all the above-mentioned forms of gig economy lies in the ability of employees to decide for themselves when, where, and for whom they will work (Anwar & Graham, 2020; Green, 2006). Flexibility, in other words, is a key feature of the gig economy, comes from the model “flexible firm” proposed by Atkinson (1984) and makes gig employment attractive. However, experience shows that quite often restrictions are imposed on gig workers by market demand (Parkinson, 2017).

Wakabayashi (2019) argues that in the form of employment proposed by the gig economy, employees do not receive the same benefits as in traditional forms of work, such as participation in training programs etc. Prassl (2018) goes further and sounds the alarm for exploitation, as well as limited personal and financial security.
According to Berger et al. (2018:2), gig economy workers seem to be motivated by elements other than monetary rewards, such as freedom and autonomy. Storey et al. (2018), add the factors of flexibility and control both in terms of time and the tasks they choose to work on. Gandia (2012) pointed out the feeling of the absence of a boss, as a key stimulus and integration into the new form of employment, supplementing the need of employees to participate in a variety of tasks. On the other hand, Rosenblat (2016) emphasizes that participants in the gig economy, like Uber taxi drivers, are solely motivated by their social status, which forces them to participate in it, regardless of salary and other benefits mentioned above. Finally, in a research performed by Bhattacharya & Shepherd (2021) at food delivery drivers working with Deliveroo (an American food delivery company), results show that the main motivation factor and the reason for joining the gig economy is flexibility, followed by economic rewards.

3. Research methodology

Based on the theoretical framework about the structure and the operation of the platform economy, the present research aims at identifying the motivation factors and the level of job satisfaction among Greek gig workers and more specifically food delivery drivers of Wolt company. More specifically, the research questions that the study attempts to answer are the following: i) which are the demographic characteristics of the gig economy workers in Greece, ii) which are the factors that affect their motivation and iii) what is the level of their job satisfaction.

The research tool was an electronic questionnaire, created and managed with Google forms. It consisted of 71 questions and is divided into sub-categories according to the topic. The answers were formulated on 7-point Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree and 7 = Strongly Agree, as well as 1 = Not at all and 7 = Too Much).

The first group included questions that record the demographic characteristics of the sample and were selected by the study of Bhattacharya & Shepherd (2021). The second group examines the commitment of the respondents and is also based on the study of Bhattacharya & Shepherd (2021). The questions of the third group focus on the motivation that workers receive from Wolt and on which factors they consider important in their choice of work. The elements of these questions come both from Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs and the job characteristic model. The last group of questions is mainly shaped by Hertzberg's two-factor theory and investigates the drivers' satisfaction from various characteristics related to their work. The population of our research was the total number of Wolt active food delivery drivers that work for the last 12 months with the specific platform, e.g. about 700 people. In collaboration with the management of the Greek branch of Wolt, the questionnaire was forwarded to the drivers' emails. Within a period of three months (March-May 2022), a total number of 183 drivers responded, thus formulating a response rate of 26.14%.

As far as the demographic characteristics of our sample are concerned, 94.5% of the respondents are men and 49.7% are under 30-years old, with a notable percentage of about 17.5% over 51-years old. A percentage of 32.8% graduated from high school, 28.4% from a technical school and a percentage of 31.6% from University (with the 1/3 of them holding a Master’s degree). Furthermore, 40% of the respondents are single, 40% are married with children and 20% married without children. Finally, 55% of the workers cooperate with Wolt for a time period of up to 1 year, 45% for 1-2 years and no one (0%) for over 2 years.

4. Results analysis and discussion

Examining the profile of gig economy workers, it would be interesting to find out whether or not there is a commitment with the company. It should be noted though, that in the present study the term “commitment” does not refer to the concept outlined in organizational theory. Instead, it is used in order to point out how significant gig work is to the workers career and their livelihood over their lifetime. In this sense, high commitment to a role involves being more financially dependent on it, spending more hours or even years doing it and seeing it as a greater part of life plans. By contrast, low engagement roles are seen as temporary or secondary or supplementary to other work or activities.

The gig economy seems well set-up for people that need low-commitment work: students, people with other jobs trying to 'top-up' their earnings, or parents and careers looking to dip a toe in the labor market alongside their other responsibilities. As a consequence, it is natural to assume that most gig work will be of low commitment.

An indicator of commitment is whether the collaboration with the platform is the main occupation or complementary. In our research, nearly half of the riders indicated that Wolt is not their main occupation, as the majority work either in the private sector or is self-employed (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Frequency (N)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupancy</td>
<td>Only Wolt</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional employment (private sector)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional employment (public sector)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While most Wolt riders have other sources of income for themselves or their families, some get most of their work and income from the platform. 40.4% of riders are not the primary earners for their household, which may be explained by the variables of age of the participants. If the majority are students or are taking their first professional steps, it is logical to live with their parents, so they do not have the highest income. However, the percentage of those who declare that they are the main source of income of their household is very close to the percentage of the majority that was mentioned above. Most riders declare a yearly income between 5,001 and 10,000 euros and this is an income close to the minimum wage in Greece. It is worth noted that the question concerned the total annual income of the participants, regardless of whether it comes from their work in Wolt or some other professional activity. So, without knowing their net cash earnings from Wolt, it is realized that that most of them are low-income workers, facing financial hardship.

Another indicator of commitment is the time that riders spend working on the platform and how close it is to a full-time job. 25.7% of the respondents stated that their working hours are between 20 and 29 hours per week, while many of them (23%) work from 30 to 39 hours on a weekly basis. Generally, the working hours stated by most of the respondents suggest part-time occupation. This confirms Wolt's complementary role at the riders’ income, as well as the absence of a possible long-term employment prospect.

Another very interesting finding, related to Wolt riders' commitment, is their intention to keep working with the company. Almost half of the respondents (45.9%) stated that they don't expect to maintain their collaboration with the company for more than a year. 14.2% of the riders stated that they expect to continue working with Wolt for more than 3 years, while a 20.8% of them seem not sure and undecided about the expected length of cooperation with the company.

Moreover, half of the participants claim that working with Wolt is their main job and will be in the foreseeable future and the other half claims the opposite. And in this question, the sample does not state clearly. The explanation is based on the fact that the sample includes half of those whose main occupation is Wolt and those who are complementary. 47.2% of the riders claim that they work with the platform to earn more income, which is in line with previous research, which shows economic rewards factors as the main reason for joining the form of employment. This is confirmed by the fact that the majority of participants agree with the statement that the job at Wolt is temporary until they find another job. Furthermore, the results of the survey indicate that the majority of the respondents strongly disagree with the idea that working for the app is a way to develop skills that will be help for their professional career. This is mainly explained by the fact that this form of occupation is considered as occasional, unstable in nature, with limited prospects of acquiring knowledge through training programs etc., topics that are also mentioned at the relevant literature.

After examining the above issues, a logical question would be why do riders choose to work with this form of employment and which are the motivation factors that affect their decision to participate in the gig economy. In our survey, we tried to identify those factors through relevant questions and the results are presented in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject with highest income</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1.1%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes – I have the highest income</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No- someone else</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We do all have similar</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual income (€)</th>
<th>Up to 5,000€</th>
<th>45</th>
<th>24.6%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5,001€ - 10,000€</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,001€ - 15,000€</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15,001€ - 20,000€</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,001€ - 25,000€</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25,001€ - 30,000€</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 30,001€</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly working hours in Wolt</th>
<th>1-9 hours</th>
<th>24</th>
<th>13.1%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-19 hours</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29 hours</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39 hours</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49 hours</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;50 hours</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intention to continue working with Wolt</th>
<th>Up to 1 year</th>
<th>84</th>
<th>45.9%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;3 years</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t now</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Motivation factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Slightly disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Slightly agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Payment</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>122</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control over work</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-life balance</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working hours</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal safety</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career opportunities</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holidays – days off</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control over performance</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>132</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with multiple businesses</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>137</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed hourly wage</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>111</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade union representation</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working environment</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above results, it becomes clear that the most important motivation factors, as stated by Wolt riders, are the ability to work with multiple businesses, the cooperation-interaction with colleagues, the payment, the fixed hourly wage, the personal safety, the work-life balance and the holidays-days off.

On the other hand, factors such as trade union representation, working hours, career opportunities, control over performance, working environment and control over work, are considered as of lower importance for the respondents.

Going further into details about the rider’s experience from working with Wolt, respondents stated they are happy (69/183) with their cooperation with the platform, however the percentages of agreement with the above view are not very high. A considerable part of the sample is uncertain (55/183) about this statement, while there are many dissenters (59/183). The majority (43.9%) considers the work they do to be important, even though there is no opportunity for development (62.3%). It seems that the possible existence of a supervisor does not recognize the successful completion of the work of the riders (106/183). Wolt riders fully agree that they have the tools to complete their tasks. The paradox lies in the fact that they are informed by their superiors about their performance, but there does not seem to be any recognition in the form of reward from them. Finally, as mentioned above participants are considered unfair in terms of the amount of their pay compared to their job performance. All the above are presented in the following figure (Fig.1).

When it comes to satisfaction, researching it in areas such as working conditions, payment, rewards, management and organizational culture generally shows Wolt riders to be dissatisfied, or to maintain an attitude of indifference, as the average response rate there is 3.8, i.e., close to neutrality. Regarding working conditions, they consider that their tasks do not provide safety (149/183), while they consider that the platform schedules are unrealistic (108/183). Nevertheless, they consider the possibility of choosing their working time to be extremely positive, an element of flexibility that the new form of employment promotes (151/183). Again, in terms of all statements on satisfaction with working conditions, there are mainly percentages of disagreement.
In terms of payment satisfaction, the average of the answers is 3.8, which expresses slight disagreement with neutrality. They seem to disagree on the number of monetary gains, a fact that has previously received negative responses. However, they seem satisfied (110/183) with the health benefits of the platform, which is impressive as the company itself does not provide health benefits, and the issue of care and insurance relies to each employee in personal. The logical explanation is that those who agree to work with Wolt are ad hoc aware of the absence of traditional insurance benefits. They come to work in addition, so these benefits are included in their main job or it is a purely temporary professional choice based on income criteria.

Again, in terms of satisfaction with the platform's organizational culture, management and reward, respondents maintain an average attitude of neutrality or little disagreement. They seem to express their anxiety about the rating they will receive from the customer, as cumulatively bad ratings can contribute to their deactivation by the platform. For traditional employment, this equates to dismissal. However, they feel like partners rather than employees of the platform and this may be explained by the satisfaction they express in the absence of a direct boss. The decisions of management do not seem to interest them at all, while it seems that the use of the application is difficult for a large number of participants, perhaps due to a low level of education. Finally, when asked if they would suggest someone to work with the Wolt platform, 109 riders expressed their intention to do so, 60 of them would not encourage anyone to work on the platform, while 30 respondents again presented a neutral opinion.

5. Conclusions

Before discussing the practical implications of this survey, two limitations should be addressed. First, the sample of the survey is relatively small and is not necessarily representative of the gig economy workers in general. Additionally, our research in the first phase comes to describe the characteristics of the participants, but also their response rates around statements of motivation and satisfaction. The correlation between the statements was not investigated, to see the extent to which motivation may affect the final satisfaction and vice versa.

The findings presented in this report should be clear enough to suggest that most respondents find riding with Wolt to be a good source of work and that on most metrics their level of satisfaction is comparable with jobs elsewhere in the economy. Particularly, Wolt riders value positively the flexibility, the absence of a direct boss and its function as means of additional earnings. The participants seem to be fully aware of the reasons for joining the new form of employment that Wolt represents in the country. The reasons are social and financial, which is why they clearly show indifference to any issue other than working hours, safety, and payment. The idea of changing labour relations is a global reality. Self-employment will become the dominant form of work, as the gig economy that grew in the pandemic will prevail. However, self-employment means the loss of traditional employment benefits, such as social security, paid leave due to illness or other reasons, ensured health and social care in the case of an accident during their work etc. Towards this direction, food delivery riders should claim changes in legislation such as a minimum wage, which will act as a compensation for health, social care and work security issues that may arise when working for such platforms. Apart from that, it is realised that as long as the platform's economy dominates, issues such as labour rights, financial and job security and work burnout prevention should be addressed. At the same time, a safety net should be created, for workers that will be left out of the game. Finally, skills upgrade will play an important role for the workforce in the new era.
References


International Business
The Dark Side of Network Embeddedness in International Business: A Systematic Review and Integrative Framework

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Abstract:
Based on social network literature, firms are embedded within a set of strong social and business networks which favour repeated transactions and high levels of personal interaction among network members (Granovetter, 1985; Uzzi, 1996; 1997). Borrowing from sociology, embeddedness represents the extent to which economic actors, such as firms, are entangled in social structures and the intensity of information and resources exchanged between the parties involved. Despite research on the role of networks on firms’ internationalisation is gaining momentum, little is known about the potential downsides of embeddedness, particularly at the intersection of the international business field. Prior research has indeed emphasized how deep network ties can lead to more internationalisation (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009; Ellis, 2011), overlooking the phenomenon of over-embeddedness. This systematic literature review presents an analysis of 70 empirical and conceptual articles published over the last 20 years, investigating the negative influence of network embeddedness on internationalisation activities. We contribute to network and internationalisation literatures (Cuypers et al., 2020), by providing a complete overview of the existing body of knowledge on the phenomenon at four levels of analysis – inter-personal, inter-subsidiary, inter-firm, and inter-location -, as well as a snapshot of the main theoretical pillars and methodologies that have been employed in the international business field. We further advance an integrative framework which summarizes the dark sides of embeddedness at each level together with the main network theoretical lenses applied. We conclude by offering future research avenues for international business scholars.

Keywords: Internationalization, Network literature, Embeddedness, Systematic review, Integrative framework

References:
Country of origin effect on subsidiary autonomy: the case of a German automotive multinational

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Summary Abstract
Using a German automotive multinational enterprise (MNE) as the unit of analysis, this study analysed the autonomy, both operational and strategic, afforded by headquarters (HQ) to its sales and marketing subsidiaries across three countries - Germany, China and Australia. The findings revealed that the MNE applied a highly centralised management style. The overriding determinant of subsidiary autonomy was the importance of ‘Made-in-Germany’, which limited the strategic autonomy granted to subsidiaries, but allowed for some operational freedom. This was especially the case for the Chinese subsidiary, which experienced a greater amount of flexibility compared to the German and Australian subsidiaries.

Keywords
Country of Origin Effect, Subsidiary Autonomy, Automotive Industry

The importance for managers of multinational enterprises (MNEs) to understand what are the factors involved in managing foreign affiliates has been well articulated in studies by Dimitratos, Liouka, Ross and Young (2009) and Birkinshaw and Hood (1998). As headquarters (HQ) becomes more dependent on its subsidiaries and the foreign entity gradually gains significance (Birkinshaw & Hood, 1998), a practical understanding of the Headquarter-Subsidiary Relationship (HSR) is increasingly warranted especially in the functional areas of MNE operation (Paterson & Brock, 2002).

A key contribution of this study is to increase the practical understanding of the HSR in relation to marketing and sales subsidiaries, and to determine the factors that underpin the autonomy granted to these subsidiaries. Marketing and sales subsidiaries were chosen for this study because as Kozlenkova, Hult, Lund, Mena and Pekec (2015) point out, marketing channels are where the customer value add takes place in the supply chain. It is where those value-creating aspects of the chain are tested in the relationship with the end customers. This exploratory study investigates the relationship between the HQ of a German Automotive MNE and its sales/marketing subsidiaries, which is especially relevant for this industry as most subsidiaries are focused on sales & marketing (Birkinshaw, Bouquet, & Ambos, 2006).

Agency Theory
Agency Theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976), is used in this case study to help provide insight into the HSR relationship. Agency theory postulates that companies are a ‘nexus of contracts’ between the owners (principals) and managers (agents) to effectively control the use of resources (Abbasi, 2009; Adams, 1994; Jensen & Meckling, 1976). For MNEs the theory applies to the relationship between HQ (principal) and subsidiary (agent), where the latter is set up to perform specific services on the company’s behalf in a foreign market. As a result, this relationship requires HQ to afford a certain level of autonomy to the subsidiary (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Agency Theory suggests that under imperfect market conditions managers tend to maximize their own profits and utilities at the expense of other corporate shareholders (Heath, 2009; Jensen & Meckling, 1976). It is further assumed, that subsidiaries have better access to locally relevant information than their HQ (Adams, 1994). This information asymmetry negatively affects a HQ’s ability to monitor and control whether foreign subsidiary decisions are within the interests of the corporation.

Country of Origin Effect
German automotive manufacturers have been found to use the ‘Made-in-Germany’ reputation as a core strategy to differentiate their brands from the competition. Underpinned by the Country-of-Origin (COO) effect
(Dichter, 1962), the theory postulates that purchasing behaviour is highly influenced by a customer’s perception and preference for a particular COO (Aiello et al., 2009). Studies have addressed the COO effect in relation to the automotive industry (e.g. Aiello, et al., 2009; Sohail & Sahin, 2010) and have found support for an international strategy among German automotive MNEs based on German standards and values.

Subsidiary Strategic and Operational Decision-Making Autonomy

McDonald et al. (2008) argued that the strategic decision-making autonomy is more relevant for larger subsidiaries and those operating in the high technology industries. These larger subsidiaries are then afforded a higher level of autonomy in order to pursue innovation and learning activities that can be transferred back to HQ (Rodrigues, 1995). According to Frost et al. (2002) for subsidiaries deemed to be “Centres of Excellence” in the areas of R&D and manufacturing, a prerequisite of their establishment is a relatively high level of strategic decision-making autonomy afforded to them by HQ in order not to limit the subsidiary’s efficiency and initiative (Frost, et al., 2002).

In contrast to strategic autonomy, operational decision-making autonomy was found to be positively related to subsidiary performance (McDonald, et al., 2008), because subsidiary managers are in a better position to make decisions that directly affect the success of their foreign operations. A study by Varblane, Männik and Hannula (2005) analysed the performance of foreign subsidiaries in Slovenia, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Estonia. The research found that autonomy in the areas of finance and marketing are the most significant determinants of an increase in the efficiency of the foreign affiliate. Further studies in this area also show that operational autonomy primarily remains with the subsidiary and the managers in the host-market (McDonald, et al., 2008; Raelin, 1989), except when management skills in the subsidiary are insufficient to guarantee its sustainable operation in line with corporate strategic directions (Aylmer, 1970). In light of the above discussion, this study seeks to answer the following research question:

How is strategic and operational autonomy determined for sales/marketing subsidiaries in this German MNE?

Research Design

A single case study approach was deemed the most appropriate to gain an in-depth understanding of the HSR in one of Germany’s global MNEs in the automotive industry. The firm being studied experiences a high level of brand awareness and places its main focus on production efficiencies and product quality in the home market, while relying on sales and marketing subsidiaries both home and abroad. Qualitative data collection from seven interviews with senior managers and documentation analysis was undertaken at HQ as well as marketing/sales subsidiaries in Germany, China and Australia. These countries selection was based on their geographic and institutional distance from each other. The template approach (Miller & Crabtree, 1992) with the development of a set of codes and categories was used as the method of analysis. Subsequent to the coding process, data was categorised into thematic segmentation for further analysis and interpretation. The findings were subsequently ‘made sense of’ through a comparison to existing theory and prior studies to gain a deeper understanding of strategic and operational subsidiary autonomy.

The car manufacturer being analysed in this case study maintains subsidiaries in numerous countries around the world. The selection of host-countries was based on their relative distance from each other, both geographically and institutionally. Subsidiaries in Germany, China and Australia provided a high degree of difference (politically, legally, economically, and culturally) and were thus considered appropriate subsidiary locations for this case study. After gaining approval from the HQ of the company, the researcher was able to interview seven interview partners in total at both HQ and the subsidiaries that were specifically chosen from the sales and/or marketing department. The seven chosen interview partners were in senior management roles, having been employed by the firm from between two to ten years.

Focused (semi-structured) interviews were undertaken in order to collect the data for this study. In addition, an analysis of company related documents and archival records was undertaken in order to triangulate with the data collected during interviews and the literature review (Tharenou, Donohue, & Cooper, 2007). A template approach was used as the prevailing analysis method, which is often used in exploratory qualitative studies (Miller & Crabtree, 1992). The researcher developed a set of codes and categories (template) to systematically analyse the data obtained from the interview transcripts and documents. Following the coding process, data was then organised into theme segments for further analysis and interpretation, and finally the results were compared to the theory and other existing studies in order to better understand subsidiary autonomy.


Findings and Discussion

The findings revealed that the company under investigation in order to guarantee consistent representation of the brand worldwide, maintained a very strong centralised management style. The overriding determinant of subsidiary autonomy was the importance of ‘Made-in-Germany’, seen as the unique selling proposition (USP) of the company. Negligible strategic autonomy was granted to subsidiaries, decision making around strategic issues by the marketing and sales subsidiaries was virtually non-existent. According to one subsidiary manager:

“… German companies in the automotive industry that push internationally have tended to be driven ‘German-centric’, partly because that’s why people buy German products. The logic is they want German products, they want them delivered in the German way, they want them presented in the German way” (Manager DSub).

Some operational autonomy was afforded to the foreign subsidiaries in order to overcome differences in local market requirements. This was the especially the case for the Chinese subsidiary and less so for the German and Australian subsidiaries.

Strategic Autonomy

Strategic autonomy for sales/marketing subsidiaries was highly limited by HQ. The COO effect and the need for consistent positioning worldwide does not allow the MNE to apply different strategic concepts without the danger of compromising brand perception. According to a manager at HQ:

“…significant targets like volume, marketing budget, incentive budget, number of employees as well as pricing and all product decisions are decided centrally. Markets are not allowed to do any special versions of cars without our knowledge. The markets then decide about placement and the whole use of resources, like the use of the marketing budget and incentive budget” (Manager AHQ).

Due to the company’s high level of success across foreign markets it can be argued that the lack of strategic autonomy in this case does not necessarily affect the subsidiary’s efficiency and success, which is in line with arguments raised by McDonald et al. (2008). Despite a centralised management approach, HQ does consult with subsidiary managers in developing strategy. Subsidiary managers were seen as ‘specialists’ in their markets and could provide highly valuable input during the process of strategy development.

Operational Autonomy

Across the three countries’ marketing and sales subsidiaries, managers understood that it is a key responsibility of the foreign subsidiary to position the brand in the foreign market according to German standards while respecting local market requirements. A high level of operational flexibility was required to successfully apply HQ-centred measures and concepts to the individual target markets. According to two subsidiary managers:

“If you think about what ideas and mottos are being forced centrally – sometimes these are quite a fair bit away from what the market requires. But we correct that then at our level, that’s what we are here for. I don’t see it as a problem; otherwise there would be no reason for our existence” (Manager BSub).

“On the operational, how we translate strategies so that they work in China I think we have a lot of autonomy, but we stick to the core strategic ideas from Germany” (Manager FSub).

A level of operational autonomy exists across the subsidiaries, underpinned by a HSR based on collaboration and trust, which results in measures and activities being implemented in accordance with corporate guidelines. Customer brochures and magazines were all found to be in line with corporate identity, even though a third of the pages were customised for local tastes by the respective subsidiaries. Both the Chinese and Australian versions of the marketing brochures constantly referred to the core German principles of the German brand, which again highlighted the importance of the ‘Made in Germany’ USP. All three subsidiaries had some degree of operational autonomy around the marketing message but very much in line the strategic direction of HQ.

Implications and Conclusion

This study has extended our understanding of the COO effect on subsidiary autonomy. Despite the qualitative nature of the single case study approach and the limits of the generalizability and/or external validity of findings (Yin, 2009), some general conclusions can be made as they relate to MNEs involved in high end manufacturing coupled with a high brand recognition underpinned by a COO effect.
While Rosengarten and Stürmer (2006) found a move away from centralisation and production moving to emerging economies, this is probably not likely to be the case for MNEs which have a strong USP underpinned by a COO effect. In the case of this German Automotive MNE the ‘Made in Germany’ COO effect resulted in the pursuit of a more centralised management approach, with some degree of subsidiary consultation around strategic issues prior to a formalisation of the strategic direction of the firm. More involvement of subsidiary managers in HQ decisions ultimately increases foreign managers’ identification with the company. In the long-term this will also help reduce monitoring and controlling costs for HQ, since foreign managers then tend to act more within corporate guidelines and do not undermine HQ strategies.

In relation to the Chinese market, the study’s findings suggest that HQs may need to increase their understanding of the host-market environment without limiting the foreign subsidiary’s operational freedom. The differences in the markets suggest greater operational freedom needs to be afforded to the managers of the Chinese subsidiary compared to managers in Australia or Germany in order to accommodate the distinct cultural environment. An increased operational freedom can be afforded to foreign marketing subsidiaries operations like China. This will require subsidiary managers to adhere to and not tamper with the overriding home country HQ message, but actually undertake activities that reinforce the strength of the brand and the USP.

Although the single case study approach is limiting in terms of the generalizability of the findings to other MNEs (Yin, 2009), future research could use a multiple case study approach. Such an approach would also allow for the study of other high-end manufacturers in the automotive industry or other industries in order to investigate the COO effect on subsidiary autonomy.

References
Decision support model to estimate export “attractiveness” index and classify export opportunities

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Abstract:
The aim of this study is to specify and describe a Decision Support System (DSS), as derived from international marketing research, which can help identify the most ‘attractive’ markets (destination/product combinations), namely, markets with export opportunities, with special emphasis on agricultural products. The DSS primarily attempts to select markets where there are export opportunities based on qualitative and quantitative criteria recognised by the international literature as necessary in order for exports to be successful and sustainable, taking also here into account several transport cost components. Then, an export ‘attractiveness’ index is created in order to sort export opportunities, and classify ‘attractive’ markets based on their specific characteristics. The various databases used are described and various possible forms and examples of implementation are explained. In particular, the methodology, which has been hitherto implemented to several countries worldwide, is properly adjusted and demonstrated for the case of Greek agricultural products. The DSS can be utilised in collaboration with other databases, models and DSS in order to develop an integrated logistics market monitoring system (logistics observatory) in the country.

Keywords: Decision support model, international marketing, exports, agricultural products, logistics/transport cost.

Introduction
This study aims at developing and presenting a Decision Support System (DSS), which can help identify the most ‘attractive’ markets (destination/product combinations), i.e., export opportunities for Greek agricultural products. The current DSM is derived from international marketing research and has been long used to identify, for an exporting country (the home market), the export opportunities in a target economy (or target economies) or the world at large. This methodology has been applied both for foreign countries and for Greece. Specifically, relevant studies encompass those of Cuyvers et al. (1995; 2012) for Belgium, Cuyvers (2004) and Cuyvers et al. (2017) for Thailand, Pearson et al. (2010) for South Africa, Viviers et al. (2014), for the Netherlands, Cameron et al. (2021) for China, and Kanellopoulos and Skintzi (2016) and Konstantakopoulou (2020) for Greece.

The objectives of the DSS are (i) the selection of markets where there are export opportunities based on criteria recognized by the international literature as necessary in order for exports to be successful and sustainable, and (ii) their classification based on the specific characteristics of each market. The DSS typically utilises macroeconomic performance data and international trade data for those countries where data are available and filters out less-interesting countries and export products. The current DSS extends previous versions by focussing in more detail on agricultural products and through incorporating more realistic aspects of transport costs. Moreover, the results of the DSS are used to construct an export ‘attractiveness’ index that incorporates the main characteristics of the markets that are considered ‘attractive’ and ranks the export opportunities. In turn, the characteristics of export opportunities can properly support export promotion or marketing strategies.

Methodology
The analytical framework used to identify the ‘attractive’ markets, i.e., export opportunities, is based on four consecutive filters. A set of criteria is applied to each filter and markets that do not meet the criteria are rejected and they are not considered as export opportunities. In the fourth filter, the markets are classified based on the market characteristics and the market share of Greece. The methodology used in the four filters is presented in detail below.
Filter 1: Political and commercial risk - Size and growth of the economy
In Filter 1, countries are first examined on the basis of the political and commercial risk that characterizes them. In order to approach the degree of risk that each country presents in relation to export transactions, the CREDENDO assessment is used. CREDENDO provides information on political risk in the short and medium / long term (over a period of more than one year), as well as on commercial risk. Countries are assessed on the basis of political risk on a scale between 1 - 7 (1 low political risk, 7 high political risk), while in relation to commercial/ trade risk they are assessed with "A", "B" or "C" (where "A" indicates low commercial risk and "C" indicates high commercial risk). In order to create an overall risk index for each country, the scale 1-7 is converted to a scale of 1-10 for the two policy risk assessments (short-term and medium / long-term), while the trade risk scale is also transformed to a scale of 1-10 (the "A" corresponds to 3.33, "B" to 6.67 and "C" to 10).

The average of the three indicators is the overall risk index. The 80th percentile is used as a critical value to exclude the less "attractive" countries. The remaining countries are assessed on the basis of four macroeconomic indicators: GDP, per capita GDP (pcGDP), the rate of change in GDP and the average rate of change in GDP over a three-year horizon (in this case, between 2018-2020). The data used are from the World Bank. The selection of these indicators is made in order to identify the "large" economies (in terms of GDP and pcGDP), as well as the countries that show economic growth (in terms of rates of change in GDP and pcGDP). The 20th percentile is used as a critical value in terms of GDP and pcGDP. A country will be rejected if GDP and pcGDP are lower than the corresponding critical value for at least two years and the average GDP and pcGDP growth rates are lower than the global average for at least one year. Alternatively, it should be noted that the DSS can be applied to a limited number of countries, such as, for example, the EU member states or all European countries, for the determination of the attractiveness index and export opportunities in this region. Similar recent studies where such a DSS has been applied to specific groups of countries are described in the literature by Jansen van Rensburg et al. (2019) and Cuyvers et al. (2017).

Filter 2: Size and market dynamics
Countries that meet the first filter move on to the second filter, where those markets that are most "attractive" are selected, on the basis of their dynamics and size. In order to select the markets, three criteria are taken into account:

(a) the rate of change in each country’s imports for each product imported in the recent short-term period (in this case, 2019-2020)

(b) the rate of change of imports of each country for each product imported in the long run (in this case, 2016-2020)

(c) the relative market size \(RM_{ij} = M_{ij} / M_{wj}\), where \(M_{ij}\) is the country’s imports of product \(j\) and \(M_{wj}\) is the world imports of product \(j\). A market is considered large if it is true that \(RM_{ij} \geq 0.02M_{wj}\).

Data from the ITC (Trade Map) and/or the UN COMTRADE database are used to calculate the three variables in this filter.

One market will pass to the next filter if the relative market size is large. If this is not the case, then, it should show short-term and long-term growth, that is, both the short-term and long-term rate of change of the country's imports for this product should be higher than the corresponding global average rates of change.

Filter 3: Obstacles and difficulties entering
Filter 3 uses two criteria in order to reject markets that present increased difficulties and significant barriers to entry. The first criterion concerns the degree of market concentration, as calculated by the Herfindahl index \(HI = \sum_{x=1}^{N} s_{xij}^2\), where \(s_{xij}\) is the share of country \(x\) in that market (country of import / product) \(ij\) and \(N\) is the number of countries exporting in the specific market. The index takes values from \(1/N\) to 1. Data from the ITC (Trade Map) and / or the UN COMTRADE database are used to construct this index.

In combination with the criteria of Filter 2, a market is considered to meet the criterion of market concentration if:

\(HI \leq 0.4\) and the market is large but does not show short-term and long-term growth,
\(HI \leq 0.5\) and the market is not large but shows short-term and long-term growth,
\(HI \leq 0.5\) and the market is large and shows either short-term or long-term growth,
\(HI \leq 0.6\) and the market is large and shows both short-term and long-term growth.

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The second criterion in this filter concerns the cost of transporting a product exported from Greece to the destination countries. The 80th percentile is used as the critical value for rejecting those markets that have high transport costs. In its simplest form, transportation costs can be expressed in terms of the distance between Athens and the capital of each destination country. Therefore, according to Filter 3, a market cannot be included in the country’s export opportunities (it is not "attractive") when it exceeds its maximum concentration limit and is far enough away (the distance exceeds the corresponding critical value). Distance provides a simple metric of the impact of transport cost. However, appropriate corrections/adjustments could be incorporated into the transport cost function to take account of possible variations in transport costs by product category and other market barriers that limit access to destination countries.

Such corrections may relate, for example, to the sensitivity of the demand for import of a product in the country of destination to changes in distance and/or delivery time along the transport network, so as to incorporate possible improvements in infrastructure, and to tariffs, especially when countries outside the European Union are included in the sample, since these figures affect the total trade cost, per category of exported product and per mode (means) of transport. The transport cost function can be further specialised to integrate in a more accurate and realistic way the various factors that shape it when sending products from Greece to any destination abroad. More specifically, instead of the simple distance criterion, the generalised transport cost between each pair of origin-destination (Athens and capital country of destination) can be used on the basis of the sum of two products: first, between the kilometre distance to the (road) transport network and the coefficient relating to the variable cost per kilometre (in euro per km) and, second, between the travel time and the coefficient relating to the time-varying cost (in euro per hour), for a typical 40 tonne representative truck (Persyn et al., 2019).

In addition, data from the UNCTAD database in cooperation with the World Bank can be used, relating to the total cost of the international freight transport services, in particular those of the agricultural product category, between each origin-destination pair. Total international shipping costs are expressed as the difference between the amount of import cost (Cost, insurance, and freight or CIF) and export cost (Free on Board or FOB), which incorporates elements such as distance, fuel cost, labour costs, tolls and other characteristics of transport depending on the mode. Therefore, this methodology leads to the development of a transport cost-adjusted attractiveness index. In order for a market to proceed to the next filter, it must meet at least one of the two criteria (market concentration and transport cost).

Filter 4: Classification of "attractive" markets

In the fourth filter, the relative share of Greece is calculated for the remaining markets, and the markets are classified according to their size and growth (based on the variables presented in Filter 2) and the relative market share of Greece. Data from ITC (Trade Map) and/or the UN COMTRADE database are used. The relevant market share of Greece is calculated by the following formula:

$$RMS_{GR,i,j} = \frac{X_{GR,i,j}}{X_{six,i,j}}$$

where $X_{GR,i,j}$ are the exports of Greece for product $j$ in country $i$, and $X_{six,i,j}$ are the exports of the six largest exporting countries for product $j$ in country $i$. Markets are classified as follows:

- $RMS_{GR,i,j} \leq 0.05$: The relative share of Greece is small,
- $0.05 < RMS_{GR,i,j} < 0.25$: The relative share of Greece is small to medium,
- $0.25 < RMS_{GR,i,j} < 0.5$: The relative share of Greece is medium to large,
- $RMS_{GR,i,j} \geq 0.5$: The relative share of Greece is large.

Therefore, the markets that reached Filter 4 can be placed in a table that will have the form of Table 1.
Table 1: Classification of export opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relative market share</th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Small/Medium</th>
<th>Medium/Large</th>
<th>Large</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large market size</td>
<td>LDD</td>
<td>LDC</td>
<td>LDB</td>
<td>LDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term &amp; long-term growth</td>
<td>SAD</td>
<td>SAC</td>
<td>SAB</td>
<td>SAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large market size &amp; short-term growth</td>
<td>LCD</td>
<td>LCC</td>
<td>LCB</td>
<td>LCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large market size &amp; long-term growth</td>
<td>LBD</td>
<td>LBC</td>
<td>LBB</td>
<td>LBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large market size &amp; short-term &amp; long-term growth</td>
<td>LAD</td>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>LAB</td>
<td>LAA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to make the market classification easier to understand and to use, an "attractiveness" index can be created which will consist of three rankings:

- The first ranking will be the market size, where L will indicate the large market size and S the small market size,
- The second ranking will concern market development where A will indicate long-term and short-term growth, B will indicate long-term growth, C will indicate short-term growth and D will indicate that the market is not characterised by neither long-term nor short-term growth.
- The third ranking will concern the relative market share of Greece, where A will indicate the large relative market share, B will indicate the medium to large relative market share, C will indicate the small to medium relative market share and D will indicate the small relative market share.

If, for example, a market corresponds to the LBB index, it means that the market is large, characterised by long-term growth and the relative share of Greece is medium to large. As it can be understood from the analysis of the previous filters, some combinations are not possible. To be precise, all combinations starting with SB, SC and SD are not feasible as markets with these characteristics have been rejected in Filter 2. Of the 32 initial combinations of the index, only 20 are possible (as many as the cells in the Table 1).

The attractiveness index described could also be converted to a numerical index as shown in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Index</th>
<th>Numerical Index</th>
<th>Overall Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market size</td>
<td>Market growth</td>
<td>Relative share of Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, it is worth noting that the stages, filters and implementation criteria of the proposed DSS can be suitably adapted and change according to the criteria, the order in which they are examined, as well as their quantitative or qualitative evaluation, depending on the scope and the characteristics of each variable or indicator and the aggregate sample of countries examined. Especially in relation to transport costs, its integration into the DSS could be considered as a quality criterion, especially in cases where it is affected by complex factors, beyond those of distance and travel time, such as the availability, quality and capacity of transport infrastructure, means of transport, transport units, etc. In these cases, the transport cost could be characterised as low / medium / high, i.e., with the letters A / B / C, respectively, at which point a fourth letter is added to the quality index of Table 1, which is then added respectively in the numerical index of Table 2.

For example, in Table 1, an LCBA "attractiveness" index could be obtained, since a destination country has a large market size (L), has only short-term and not long-term growth (C), Greece’s relative market share is medium / large (B), and transport costs could be described as low (this market is accessible or close) (A). Assuming that for the transport cost criterion the values 100 for A, 75 for B, and 50 for C are adopted, and all variables are evaluated as equally weighted, then, the LCBA quality index will be converted to a numerical index with a value of 81.

Demonstration Results
Table 3 presents a simple example of the application of the DSS for the estimation of the attractiveness index for the year 2020 and for the product "Olive oil and its fractions, whether or not refined, but not chemically modified" (tariff heading 1509) exported by Greece. Specifically, in Table 3, we observe that Germany corresponds to the LAC index, which means that it is a large market (L), which shows growth in both the short and long term (A) and the relative share of Greece is small to medium (C). Based on the value of the numerical index (83), Germany can be considered as the most attractive country in the EU for Greece to export this commodity, with Spain following with a numerical index value of 75. Also, the database can offer a more detailed information on the exports of this product. In the same example, the relative share of Greece in the German olive oil market is 19.8%, the annual change (2019-2020) of Greek exports to Germany is 13.1%, while the average annual change rate for the years 2016 -2020 is 2.5%. Finally, Germany accounts for 4.7% of world olive oil imports.

| L. | B | A | 100 | 75 | 100 | 92 |
| L. | B | B | 100 | 75 | 75 | 83 |
| L. | B | C | 100 | 75 | 50 | 75 |
| L. | B | D | 100 | 75 | 25 | 67 |
| L. | C | A | 100 | 50 | 100 | 83 |
| L. | C | B | 100 | 50 | 75 | 75 |
| L. | C | C | 100 | 50 | 50 | 67 |
| L. | C | D | 100 | 50 | 25 | 58 |
| L. | D | A | 100 | 25 | 100 | 75 |
| L. | D | B | 100 | 25 | 75 | 67 |
| L. | D | C | 100 | 25 | 50 | 58 |
| S | A | A | 0 | 100 | 100 | 67 |
| S | A | B | 0 | 100 | 75 | 58 |
| S | A | C | 0 | 100 | 50 | 50 |
| S | A | D | 0 | 100 | 25 | 42 |
Table 3: Presentation of attractiveness index for olive oil and its fractions (tariff heading 1509)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>LAD</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>LDB</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>-3.7%</td>
<td>-5.0%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>LBD</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>SAB</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>SAC</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>LDD</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxemburg</td>
<td>SAD</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ¹ It concerns the relative market share of Greece. The sample of countries corresponds to the EU Member States. The criteria that each country does not meet are marked in red; for example, Italy does not meet the criteria for short-term and long-term development, but meets the criterion for the market size.

Conclusions
This study presents a DSS and describes how the "attractive" markets can be identified and classified accordingly, focusing on the export opportunities for the agricultural products of Greece. The identification of export opportunities, as it has been highlighted in the international literature, can help Greek companies in planning their export marketing strategy, but also government agencies in formulating an effective development policy to promote Greek exports. In addition, with the introduction and appropriate specialisation of the criterion of transport cost, critical quantitative or qualitative characteristics of transport/logistics conditions can be incorporated into the DSS which affect accordingly the attractiveness of each market for Greece. Such characteristics may relate to the transport network distance and time, the financial cost of the international transport service per product, per unit of product, per unit of distance, per mode of transport, etc.

Consequently, international transport/transit or freight forwarding companies, exporting companies and public decision-makers can adjust, coordinate and prioritise their actions in relation to the target markets, or those markets where they wish to improve export performance. For instance, in the field of public policy, appropriate interventions may include improvements in the connectivity or capacity of transport infrastructure hubs and networks, strengthening of combined transport operations, changes in the tariff and tax regime, bilateral or multilateral trade agreements, etc. The proposed DSS can be further utilised in collaboration with other databases, models and DSS to facilitate the development of an integrated logistics market monitoring system (logistics observatory) in the country. Such a system would promote the provision of high-quality services for business exports, increasing business and tax revenues, and strengthening the performance of transport companies and the satisfaction of their customers.

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References:


Marketing and Social Media
Social networks in the educational process - Their use in the marketing of higher education institutions

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Abstract
The higher education sector has traditionally been the most demanding in each country. In the light of significant changes, such as the internationalization of education and the rapid increase in the use of social networks by the global population, universities are creating social media accounts to promote and advertise the educational services they provide. Their main use is aimed at attracting new students, through the two-way communication promoted by these media. However, their use does not seem to follow a clear and structured way of integrating them into the formal marketing strategy of the institutions and consequently their results in making decisions for future studies are poor. Nevertheless, their contribution to the smooth integration of new entrants into the student academic community is recognized as significant. Despite the risks posed by the use of social media by universities, mainly for their reputation, the benefits remain much greater and further research in this area is suggested, securing resources and establishing procedures and strategic planning for their successful integration in marketing.

Key words: marketing, higher education, strategy, management

Introduction
The higher education is perhaps the most competitive field of education in any country, mainly due to its prestige and the economic benefits it entails. The commercialization, privatization and globalization of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) led to the adoption of marketing theories in order to create a strong brand name (Bharti & Purohit, 2016), gaining a competitive advantage and a larger share of students international market. The undeniable development of social media has brought about significant changes in society and communication. The increase in the use of social media is noted on two levels: the number of available and used social networks has increased, but also the number of posts / posts and comments on all social networks (Oliveira & Figueira, 2015). Almost 45% of the world's population uses social media platforms (We Are Social, 2019 as cited in Salem, 2020). The advent of social media has revolutionized communication in two ways: first, social media has enabled one person to send an instant message to millions of other people worldwide in no time (Nyangau & Bado, 2012), and second, does not follow a top down hierarchy, but all members have equal and open opportunities to publish and view information (Alkhas, 2011).

Marketing in higher education has been discussed in the literature since the 1970s, but concerns continue to be expressed that it adversely affects the educational context (Stachowski, 2011). Although its effectiveness as a tool for attracting students has been identified, gaps have been identified between the information sought by prospective students and those provided by universities in their traditional forms of communication (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). This gap is being filled by the use of social media and is a relatively new phenomenon. Many public and private universities and colleges use social media platforms (Merrill, 2011, Jan, & Ammari, 2016, Hossain, & Sakib, 2016, Nazeer, 2017, as cited in Nyangau & Bado, 2012) as a means of communication with graduates, current and prospective students and society (Helgesen, 2008 as cited in Bharti & Purohit, 2016). Social media enables institutions to communicate through their platform with an international audience and increase their visibility (Constantinides & Stango, 2011) and the likelihood of their followers applying to study (Hayes, Ruschman, & Walker, 2009 as cited in Bharti & Purohit, 2016).
The two-way communication provided by these media also gives the prospective students the opportunity to start a discussion with the institutions they are interested in and to express their opinion freely and transparently through the same platform. They are informed not only by the data deliberately promoted by the institutions, but also by the comments and evaluations of other users that are freely expressed on these pages (Bharti & Purohit, 2016). These capabilities have reduced their reliance on traditional forms of marketing (Eikelmann, Hajj, & Peterson, 2008, Grönroos, 1994, Karin & Eiferman, 2006, Peppers & Rogers, 1993). Thomas, 2007 as cited in Constantinides & Stagno (2012), a trend that began to emerge as early as the 1990s (Grönroos, 1994). Peppers & Rogers, 1993, as cited in Constantinides & Stagno, 2012). The benefits of using social media include the lack of restrictions on time, place, means and costs (Kim & Ko, 2012 as cited in Prabowo, Bramulya, & Yuniarti, 2020). However, effective strategies for integrating them into the organizational culture of universities have not been widely developed, which deprives them of the ability to maximize their goals, despite the waste of time, human and logistical resources spent on their presence on social networks (Oliveira & Figueira, 2015).

Use of social media in the marketing of higher education

The universities often pay for advertising on social networking sites, and more often than not, they create accounts managed by their staff, especially those in marketing departments, which provide them with peer-to-peer communication with potential domestic and international students and increase trust at the institution. This is due to their high usage rate by the younger generations and their quick response to their posts and messages (Xiong et al., 2018). Oliveira & Figueira (2015) research analyzes seven categories of messages that appear through social networks and show that the marketing strategies followed by universities focus essentially on building and maintaining their image and reputation, as well as advertising their educational services but completely neglecting the communication / interactive dimension associated with these interactive environments.

Many studies suggest that the main use of social media in the marketing of universities is aimed at attracting prospective students. To this end, academic achievements, conference information and innovations are promoted and the connection of institutions with the labor market is promoted (Ali, Khan, & Kashif, 2020). Research by Barnes and Matson (2009, 2010) in American colleges (cited in Nyangau & Bado, 2012) has shown that the use of social media to attract and research new students is constantly increasing, as they consider them important for this and the staff that manages them is becoming more and more familiar with their use. Different types of platforms are used, even for virtual campus tours, a use that during the coronavirus pandemic spread to all institutions around the world. According to Nyangau & Bado (2012) these data were verified in a study by Barnes and Lescault (2011), where it was also reported that institutions implement policies and designate responsible for maintaining their accounts, but also Cappex.com (2010), which revealed the intention to increase the resources available on the use of social media in the future.

Attracting international students is better served by the use of social media than by traditional marketing methods, as it is more cost-effective and allows for “direct contact” (Merrill, 2010 as cited in Nyangau & Bado, 2012). Taecharungroj (2017) found that universities in the US and Thailand post content on their Facebook about research, school, curriculum, campus, students, alumni, industry, events, products, image and reputation, announcements and more. The most common type of posting from US universities is research, while from Thai universities it is events and announcements.

Alfonzo (2021) in his research on the benefits of using social media in the marketing of non-profit organizations in higher education also claims that they facilitate graduate donations and communication and support for active students. Investigates, in addition, the procedures followed by the administrators of the accounts of the HEIs and argues that they work with high levels of dedication to the content they post as they strive to create, monitor, analyze and collaborate on that content.

In the systematic literature review of Nyangau & Bado (2012) the findings indicate that the use of social media by higher education institutions is constantly increasing, however it is not clear whether the content on the social media pages of the universities influences the choices of the candidates.

Social media used in the marketing of higher education

The literature shows that Facebook is today the most widely used social networking tool, followed by Twitter (Barnes & Lescault, 2011, Cappex.com, 2010, Glassford, 2010, Merrill, 2010, Barnes & Mattson, 2009, Varsity Outreach, 2011, as ref. in Nyangau & Bado, 2012. Alexa, Alexa, & Stoica, 2012). Facebook seems to be chosen for advertising because it enables institutions to create a fan page and a forum where they connect with potential students, that is, to maintain a live online presence through regular updates (Cappex.com, 2010, Fusch, 2011a, 2011b PBP Executive Reports, 2010, Varsity Outreach, 2011, as cited in Nyangau & Bado, 2012, Xiong et al., 2018) and additionally reach out to the friends of these prospective students (Xiong et al., 2018). In addition, the
results of its use are immediate and measurable and the campaigns can be immediately modified to better meet the demands of the public (Cordero-Gutiérrez, &Lahuerta-Otero, 2020). A Varsity Outreach study (2011, cited in Nyangau&Bado, 2012) states that Facebook is not used in marketing because managers do not know enough about how it works, do not recognize that it provides many opportunities to attract students, are afraid of losing brand name control, are concerned about privacy breaches and there is a lack of resources. The fear of losing the brand name may stem from the fact that social media chats are very fluid and as a result, an institution may not control what users post on their profiles. The same problems were identified by Mazurek, Korzyński, &Górská (2019).

Twitter is mainly used to brief information and redirect students to the university's main website. Institutions use the 're-tweet' function to convey positive experiences from prospective and current students. Despite the good results it offers in marketing education, Facebook is preferred, as it seems to meet more financial criteria than Twitter (PBF Executive Reports, 2010, as cited in Nyangau&Bado, 2012). Other social media choices are YouTube (Barnes and Lescault, 2011,Capex.com, 2010, Merrill, 2010, Varsity Outreach, 2011,Glassford, 2010, as cited in Nyangau&Bado, 2012), blogs (Barnes and Lescault, 2011, Varsity Outreach, 2011, Merrill, 2010, as cited in Nyangau&Bado, 2012) and LinkedIn (Merrill, 2010, cited in Nyangau&Bado, 2012), with Alkhas (2011) citing and Flickr, Foursquare, MySpace, Wordpress, Picasa, Digg and Delicious.

**The use of social media by students**

According to Xiong et al. (2018) prospective students are increasingly relying on social media decision-making, which provides universities with opportunities to understand candidates' needs through effective two-way communication. However, little is known about how prospective students use them and the impact they have on the decision-making process in their choice of study and university (Constantinides&Stagno, 2012). Research by Stagno (2010, cited in Nyangau&Bado, 2012) and Constantinides&Stagno (2011) showed that prospective students still preferred traditional methods of informing themselves about choosing a university institution, such as university visits. and brochures, while social networking sites were last on the list of resources for this type of information. Stagno argued that being on a social networking site is not in itself a marketing strategy and that institutions need to develop a clear marketing strategy for social networking. Stageman (2011) argued that university social networking sites do not have a significant influence on participants' decisions, but become significant when prospective students have already made the decision to attend a particular institution. They are then used in two-way communication with university executives and the creation of a network of friends, which contribute to the smooth transition to student life, a view supported by the findings of Nyangau&Bado (2012).

**Problems and Challenges of Using Social Media in Higher Education Marketing**

Despite their enormous potential and widespread use, social media marketing presents new challenges for higher education institutions. The low level of commitment from academic institutions (Bharti&Purohit, 2016) and the lack of clear political and ethical guidelines that guide the interactions between prospective students and account managers (Barnes & Mattson et al., 2009, Bado, 2012) can even lead to lawsuits. Public complaints and conflicts of interest may arise as a result of limited scrutiny of these media (Bharti&Purohit, 2016). There is also a disconnect between theory and practice when it comes to marketing on social media platforms and their use does not seem to be systematic, nor does it follow a clear marketing strategy or have clear and measurable goals (Spraggon, 2011, cited in Nyangau&Bado, 2012), as required to show positive results.

**Conclusions and suggestions**

The literature review shows that both higher education institutions and prospective students use social media, albeit for different purposes. Higher education institutions seem to be becoming increasingly aware of the importance of these tools in marketing and are using them to connect with potential students and promote them (Barnes &Lescault, 2011, Barnes &Mattson, 2010, Capex.com, 2010, Glassford, 2010, Merrill, 2010, Varsity Outreach, 2011, as cited in Nyangau&Bado, 2012). However, despite the increasing use of social media, they still prefer traditional marketing methods (Nyangau&Bado, 2012). Bharti&Purohit (2016) argue that social media requires constant use and monitoring of their online activities and use and therefore should complement traditional marketing methods, rather than completely replace them.

Only a few studies have been found on their use by prospective students and their role in their educational choices (Stageman, 2011,Stagno, 2010, cited in Nyangau&Bado, 2012,Constantinides&Stagno, 2011). According to them, the influence of social media on the final choice of university does not seem strong, which is probably due to the lack of relevant content, due to the low commitment of such tools by universities. The creation of attractive applications on social media is therefore the great challenge for the marketing of universities, especially in times like the introduction of the minimum admission base that occurred recently in Greek Universities (Law 4777/2021) and increased competition between them. The correct promotion of the institution can attract those students whose cured the best grades in the Panhellenic exams.
constantinides & stagno (2012) propose to increase the hours devoted to this purpose, mainly for the provision of instant answers to users and the development of formal online counseling programs for candidates, with the possibility of one-on-one chat in real time (nyangau & bado, 2012). in order for managers to be able to motivate influential people to publish content related to institutions, they must be actively and consistently involved, understand the online behavior of individuals, and recognize that followers strongly define this relationship.

although social media seems to be changing the marketing map of higher education, their integration is still evolving. establishing guidelines and regulations for monitoring and evaluating social media marketing (ali, khan, & kashif, 2020), allocating resources, and defining specific tools (nyangau & bado, 2012) and benchmarking (spraggon, 2011, as cited in nyangau & bado, 2012) are deemed necessary. social media marketing should be based on two-way communication and dialogue, with transparency and data management measures so as not to cause problems for the reputation of institutions (constantinides & stagno, 2012). for this purpose, it is proposed to clearly define the managers of these media (alkhas, 2011) and to cultivate their relevant knowledge in a comprehensive way (mazurek, korzyński, & górskia, 2019).

research on the marketing of higher education institutions through social networking should focus on identifying the most effective social networking tools, thus ensuring the best targeting using the already limited resources. the expectations of the target population (alexa, alexa, & stoica, 2012) should also be understood in order to determine the necessary changes in the way higher education institutions advertise (cordero-gutiérrez, & lahuerta-oterio, 2020) for improvement of marketing results.

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The duplicitous effects of COVID-19 perception on behavioural tendencies towards fashion brands on Instagram in a sub-Saharan African context

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Abstract:

Purpose. Recent research has either called for investigating (Mahmoud, Hack-Polay, Grigoriou et al., 2021) or examined (Mahmoud, Ball, Rubin et al., 2021; Mason, Narcum, & Mason, 2021) consumer behaviour on social media during the coronavirus pandemic time. Thus, this study responds to those scholarly calls and efforts and investigates the moderating effects of COVID-19 perception on relationships amongst consumers’ levels of enjoyment, usefulness, satisfaction, and intentions to follow and recommend fashion brands on Instagram, a steadily growing social media platform with an estimated population of 1.44 users in the year 2025 (Statista, 2022).

Methods. The study occurred in a sub-Saharan African context during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. The data of 310 Instagram users based in Uganda and Nigeria were analysed using a variance-based structural equation modelling.

Findings. Whilst our analyses demonstrated support for previously reported results in the literature, mainly by offering evidencing the full and positive mediating role of satisfaction in transmitting the effects of enjoyment and usefulness to higher levels of intentions to follow and intentions to recommend fashion brands on Instagram, COVID-19 perception was found to lower the chances of being satisfied as a result of enjoyment, albeit the total effects of COVID-19 perception on satisfaction and ultimately the behavioural intentions of following and recommend fashion brands on Instagram.

Originality. This empirical investigation bridges the research gap posited in examining the moderating role of pandemic perception in the way consumers behave towards fashion brands on social media, notably in a little researched context like sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: COVID-19 perception, pandemic, fashion, social media marketing, Africa.

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The influence of social media photo-sharing on social capital in mitigating loneliness in older consumers

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**Abstract:**

Visual data is now the predominant form of information shared on social media. This research responds to the fundamental societal challenges of increased loneliness and an ageing world population through investigating photo-sharing on social media as a means to enhance connectivity with others and thus social capital. The study adopts a two-stage qualitative approach in Italy and Great Britain with older consumers, first conducting four focus groups involving participatory visual research, followed by 16 in-depth interviews. The findings affirm the potential of image-based social media in increasing both bridging and bonding social capital. Photo-sharing emerges as transformative in turning an individual experience into a collective one, and through doing so connects older consumers thereby lessening feelings of loneliness. A further nuanced understanding of social capital includes that social capital bonds can be broken when vulnerability is exposed, and trust is lost. This study extends the scholarship regarding social capital and anchors its relevance to the contemporary phenomena of social media use and older consumers.

**Keywords:** Social capital, loneliness, photo-sharing.
Media sharing apps (Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat) via smartphones: something pleasant that easily fills my time

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Abstract:
The continuance intention to social media use has been the focus of contemporary research. Yet, in most of these studies no reference is made either to Social Media categories or to access devices as factors affecting it. Social Media via smartphones has evolved into one of the most dynamic social interaction means. The main purpose of the present research is to fill these gaps and study the continuance intention to use Social Media Apps and in particular the Media Sharing Apps, through the most accessible devices (smartphones).

More specifically, the present study explores the Uses & Gratifications obtained that lead users to the increased use of Media Sharing Apps in the smartphone environment and suggests a mediating role of the engagement experiences on this relationship. Media Sharing Apps via smartphones (Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat) have as a dominant element the ‘profile’, a personal space through which users are expressed in person by sharing photos and videos, controlling visibility of this information and material in a synchronous or asynchronous communication.

Recent research has shown that smartphone is the main device through which users visit various categories of social media to entertain, communicate with their friends, be informed and collect information easily, quickly and without time and space restrictions. Active smartphone users exceed 5.2 billion worldwide. There are 4.2 billion social media users, of which 98.8% visit them through their smartphones (We are social, 2021). Specifically, during their smartphone use, they devote 90.7% of their time on chatting applications, 88.4% on social networking applications and on video and entertainment applications 67.2%, with Facebook, WhatsApp, Messenger and Instagram holding the four (4) highest positions (We are social, 2021).

The rapid growth and popularity of social media has provoked researcher interest creating a wide range of studies on the Uses & Gratifications and the use of social media. However, research has focused on either social media as a whole or on individual platforms without comparing the different categories of social media. Users have at their disposal a plethora of social media with similar features, which enables them to easily switch between mediums. This ease of switching social media leads each medium to try retain its users. The classification of the most popular social media in categories based on their dominant elements contributes to a better understanding of the Uses & Gratifications provided by each category as well as a better understanding of user behavior in each category with the ultimate goal of achieving user retention.

In the majority of these studies, no reference is made to the access device (i.e. if the user uses social media via PC or laptop or tablet or smartphone) with the exception of few recent surveys that refer to all mobile devices (without specifying their research on a specific type of mobile device, eg tablet or smart phone or laptop). Each device has different features (e.g. device / screen size, multi-function capability, spatial / temporal mobility, speed, connectivity, communication, etc.) that provide different Uses & Gratifications and experiences to the user. In the case of smartphones, social media is users primary choice, making it the most ideal device to study social media use. Being the most personal device for users, as other smart devices can be used by several users in parallel (e.g. tablet, laptop), the smartphone in combination with social media are the “digital personality” of the user (Vlachopoulou, 2020).

The investigation of the continuance intention of information systems has attracted researcher interest since the beginning of the 21st century (Ashraf et al., 2018). According to Bhattacherjee (2001), the usage intention of a system or a technology is related to user’s intention to keep using the system or the technology after the initial use. Several studies discussed the continuance intention for various fields, such as social media (Idemudia et al., 2016; Moyakket, 2015; Hsu et al., 2014; Sun et al., 2014; Wu et al., 2014), electronic books (Maduku, 2017), mobile messaging devices (Nysveen et al., 2005; Gan & Li, 2015; Oghuma et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2017). The continuance intention to use social media has been investigated by previous studies due to the rapid growth and popularity of social media (Kaur et al., 2020; Hossain, 2019; Ashraf et al., 2016; Yen et al., 2018; Gan et al.,
2017; Casalo et al., 2017; Oghuma et al., 2016; Ha et al., 2015; Huang et al., 2014; Lin & Lu, 2011; Baker & White, 2010). However, researchers have been focusing on either social media as a whole or on individual platforms, with reference neither to Social Media categories nor to the access device (i.e. PC, laptop, tablet or smartphone).

The present study aims to fill these gaps by 1) extending the knowledge of the ‘Theory of Uses & Gratifications’ by applying it to the combination of the most dynamic social interaction means, Social Media via smartphones, 2) enriching the knowledge of the factors affecting the relationship between the Uses & Gratifications and the continuance intention to use, by examining the mediating effect of the engagement experiences, and 3) examining (1) and (2) in one of the most popular Social Media Apps categories, the Media Sharing Apps category.

For the purposes of this study, an online survey with 313 university students aged 18-24 years, users of Social Media Apps via smartphones was used. This audience is considered appropriate as it presents the highest percentage (72%) of use of applications on smartphones (Comscore, 2019) as well as the highest percentage (91%) of daily use of social media (Focus Bari, 2019).

All constructs were measured using multiple items on a seven-point Likert scale: 1 – strongly disagree and 7 – strongly agree, adopted by Ha et al. (2015), and Thakur (2016). Specifically, the five types of gratifications – cognitive, hedonic, integrative, social interactive, and mobile convenience – were measured using scales by the existing literature (Calder et al., 2009; Nambisan and Baron, 2007; Ko et al., 2005; Leung and Wei, 2000). The six engagement experiences – social-facilitation, self-connect, intrinsic enjoyment, time filler, utilitarian, monetary evaluation – and the continuance intention to use were adopted by prior studies (Calder et al., 2009; Algesheimer et al., 2005; Teo et al., 2003; Thakur, 2016).

Our findings indicate that users’ feelings about the content a company offers to them (hedonic) are more important than the availability of information they are looking for (cognitive). Moreover, the time-filler experience has the highest impact on the continuance intention. Media Sharing Apps via smartphones provide users the opportunity to fill time easily and pleasantly by publishing and accessing short-form multimedia content. Also, the difference in user’s gender percentage is remarkable as women seem to outscale men (63.90% and 36.10% respectively). This can be attributed to the fact that women are more inclined to share pictures and videos with their contacts in relation to men and/or that women are interested in following their contacts’ profiles. (to see their photos and videos). Women indicate a greater need for personal expression through photos, videos or following others’ profiles.

**Keywords:** Social Media & Smartphones, Gratifications & Engagement, Continuance intention to use

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Why Did The Home-Based Business Model Flourish On Instagram During The COVID-19 Lockdown In The UK?

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Abstract
This study employs a qualitative research methodology with interviews and market reports analysis to illustrate the reasons why individuals set up their home business during the UK national lockdown imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The objective is to highlight how social media, Instagram, enabled an entrepreneurial spirit when individuals were asked to work from home. The findings illustrate that spare time is a key motivator in starting a business from home during national lockdown. This research also found financial incentives and Instagram’s technological tools to also be motivators as to why businesses were set up on the platform during lockdown in the UK. The findings show that there are multiple reasons for setting up businesses from home, however, without the tools offered on Instagram and the spare time caused by the lockdown, the businesses would not have been curated. With the findings inferring that respondents initially saw their business as a creative outlet which in turn became a business on Instagram.

Keywords: Instagram, social media marketing, COVID-19, home business

Literature Review
COVID-19 caused a national lockdown to be implemented by the government, beginning on the 23rd of March 2020 (GOV.UK, 2020). This meant that the public had to stay at home, and many lost their jobs and income, with 34% of respondents losing an income (Statista, 2020). The impact of COVID-19 had spending habits and social media usage increase compared to previous years with Mintel (2021) reporting 54% of people stating they have spent more online since before the pandemic.

In which gives opportunity to small businesses to utilise social media as a platform for shopping, specifically Instagram. With 8% of people thinking Instagram is easy to use to make money for themselves (Mintel, 2020). The implemented lockdown, changes to spending habits and time online give context to this research project exploring small businesses set up on Instagram.

The background of the Instagram marketing concept throughout this research project, is based in the fact that social media now accounts for having around 3.6 billion users, worldwide, (Statista, 2021). More specifically, Statista (2021) released a report indicating Instagram users in the UK have increased by 8,990 from March 2020 to March 2021. This made the online retail industry a competitive market for small businesses, with 53% of businesses using social media to market and sell products and services (Statista, 2020) during the lockdown. This study investigates if the trends seen throughout the pandemic and lockdown will proceed as restrictions are lifted and how they will affect prospects for these small businesses set up from home on Instagram.

With scholars defining social media marketing (SMM) as a ‘two-way’ communication platform for businesses to customers (Richter and Schäfermeyer, 2011), with social media being a new generational marketing tool, (Kim and Ko, 2012). Consequently, recent approaches to SMM have been restructured due to the pandemic continuing through 2021 (Sakar and Clegg, 2021) and evolving technologies offering new opportunities for small businesses (Mason et al., 2011). Before March 2020, social media was perceived as an opportunity for businesses of all sizes to market their products and content at a cheap rate compared to traditional methods (Evans et al., 2010; Saravanakumar and Suganthalakshmi, 2012). Prior to the lockdown, SMM in literature was a growing model to market and to manage customer relationships. As Virtanen et al. (2017, p.472) state, ‘social media answers consumers’ demand for immediate access to information’. With literature from 2015 by Stephen, inferring that future consumer marketing will largely be on social media and become digitised in relation to a growth in time spent online; as market reports have suggested (Statista, 2021; Mintel, 2020). With social media channels such as, Instagram and Facebook offering start-up business owners a more affordable opportunity to setting up a business compared to traditional ways of marketing (Hairnl, 2017). Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick
(2016) stating SMM also offers business owners the ability to form strong relationships with the customer through the ease of direct messaging. This use of direct messenger reduces the cost of ‘customer service delivery’ (Evans et al., 2010, p.94) in the process of selling products. Henceforth, inferring that SMM is a cheap and intimate method of marketing to customers for small businesses (Dwivedi, 2015). With the main objectives of SMM to maintain brand awareness and reduce market costs (Felix et al., 2017), small start-up businesses utilised social media both before the pandemic and during. Whether social media will continue to be imperative in the small business market after lockdown restrictions are lifted is something that cannot yet be measured to its full extent, as the pandemic is ongoing.

Mason et al. (2021) as also discussed the importance of SMM during COVID-19, in a time where social distancing was imperative, SMM ensured contact with customers whilst maintaining to the laws during the pandemic. Although Mason et al.’s research was based in the US it does concentrate on the consumer’s perspective in SMM, which is a vital contribution as the change in consumer buying behaviour is what has generated many start-up businesses online. A major limitation to the literature surrounding SMM during COVID-19 is that most of it is not based in the UK therefore, applications to this discourse will be relevant, yet limited due to a lot of the research being completed in Asia and the United States. With Mason et al. (2021) and Saleh (2020) emphasising that cultural differences should be recognised when it comes to investigations into SMM and its effects on the B2C and C2C landscape. Mason et al. (2021) states that future research into SMM after COVID-19 should involve longitudinal studies to determine the exact changes in buying behaviours.

**Instagram**

Instagram was set up in 2010 with the intentions to share photographs and connect with people (Varma et al., 2020; Virtanen et al., 2017). Marketing on Instagram has expanded over recent years (Kavak et al., 2021), ensuring more small businesses use social media platforms to market products and manage CRM, (Varma et al., 2020). With Facebook being the parent company of Instagram (Dwivedi et al., 2021), additional shopping features have been added to the applications with the growth in online retail sales in line with the pandemic. Literature on Instagram marketing is limited, specifically surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and small businesses set up from home. Scholars have inferred that Instagram is one of the top used social media platforms to market business (Saleh, 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2021) in comparison to other large social media platforms such as Twitter. With Instagram and Facebook offering a digital visualisation of products (Virtanen et al., 2017), this allows for product marketing to excel for a low cost, which benefits small businesses (Michaelidou et al., 2011). Russmann and Svenson (2016, p.61) infer that the digital visualisation of products is becoming more important in marketing, therefore, concluding that Instagram acts as a ‘poster’ for organisations and their products.

**SMEs in the UK**

Foroudi et al. (2017) investigated SMEs in the UK and how technology and the concoction of service and product marketing ensures growth. Their study is applicable to this research project as it is based within the UK and focusing on SMEs and growth with technological advancements. Although written before the national lockdown in 2020, the qualitative research reveals how a SME having both tangible and intangible assets mean for more marketing capabilities and growth. By selling quality products, with strong CRM whilst utilising digital technologies, a SME like those set up on Instagram will see exponential growth (Foroudi et al., 2017, p.235). Foroudi et al. (2017) are touching on competitive advantage for SMEs through the use of innovative social media channels. Reinforcing the notion that social media marketing is ‘cost-effective’ (p.236) and an easy mode of communication with customers for selling products.

**Working from home**

Working from home (WFH) has been on the rise not only within the UK but on an international scale in recent years due to the implementation of telework and broadband technologies (Bouziri et al., 2020). With the developments in information technology (IT) and travel, more people are WFH and having a workplace to commute to is gradually losing its importance (Nakrošienė et al., 2019). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing laws, WFH was on the rise, ‘bringing work into the domestic spheres’ (Felstead, 2012, p.32), particularly in ‘skilled workers’ jobs (Behrens et al., 2021, p.4) compared to those in manual labour-intensive jobs. These jobs that allow their employees the flexibility of WFH are the jobs that have been favoured during the pandemic, with Gottlieb et al. (2020) stating that said jobs cover 40% of occupations, favouring western countries such as the UK and USA.

Country-specific analysis on WFH would enable a deeper understanding of the trends over recent years in the rise of WFH (Gottlieb et al., 2020). However, the literature does benefit this research project as it is based within the UK where WFH is cultivating within many industries, including setting up businesses from home. A study by Jarrar and Zairi (2002), based within the UK, explored employee empowerment from flexible WFH
opportunities created by IT advancements. The results revealed that over half respondents agreed WFH would empower them.

**Objectives & Research Questions**

The main objective of this research is to gain insights as to why individuals set up their business during the national lockdown in the UK and investigate how social media and the effects of lockdown enabled this entrepreneurial spirit. A final objective is to confirm if these businesses will continue to be open as we come out of the pandemic and lockdown economy.

This study aims to provide an overview of the following research questions:

1. Why did participants set up their business from home during the lockdown enforced by the government?
2. How and if said businesses will survive as the lockdown restrictions are lifted by the government in the UK?
3. Had the COVID-19 lockdown not been implemented, if business owners interviewed would have set up their business from home otherwise?

**Methodology**

This research project is an exploration into small businesses on Instagram, the exploratory nature of the research is due to the fact this research project is aiming to gain insights into what and why is occurring (Saunders et al., 2012). A qualitative methodology is applicable for this research project, in order to gain an in-depth exploration into why interviewees set up their business when they did. In correlation with social media marketing and discovering if these businesses will continue as lockdown restrictions are lifted within the UK. The rationale for a qualitative approach is based on the ability for qualitative methods to ensure insights into people’s perceptions and feelings towards topics such as, the pandemic. Interviews and focus groups are frequently the chosen method when it comes to exploratory research (Gillham, 2000). Although focus groups offer researchers the ability to discover several respondent’s experiences at one given time (Saunders et al., 2012), this research project is based on interview data.

This research project is aiming to explore the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of respondent’s experiences throughout the pandemic, which is what qualitative research is based on (Mason, 2002). Therefore, a non-probability sampling technique is appropriate. Those involved in the chosen sample must all own a business set up on Instagram during the pandemic. Etikan et al. (2016) infers that judgement sampling is when the researcher decides what needs to be explored, including the ‘deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses’ (ibid, 2016, p.2). Throughout this research project respondents were chosen and targeted based on their Instagram business page. Identification of whether respondents were applicable to the research involved an analysis of their Instagram page ensuring the start date was during the national lockdown that begun on March 23rd, 2020.

As mentioned previously, the sample was collected and targeted through the application, Instagram. An identical message was sent directly to the business page of eight respondents. The interviews took place over Google Teams due to the pandemic and location of respondents. A consent form with extra information on the purpose of the study was sent via e-mail after the respondent had agreed to take part over Instagram. This then led to the interview day, where a thirty to forty-minute interview was held, recorded and transcribed for analysis purposes. The research instrument involved was a semi-structured interview. For this to take place, an interview guide was curated to give the researcher a guide to asking questions. The semi-structured interview was chosen over a structured or unstructured interview due to its ability to permit adaptations both for the researcher and respondent. However, the response rate worked out at 75% with six respondents participating in the interview. Once consent forms were signed and sent back via email the interviews could commence. The interviews took place in July 2021, this was after the roadmap to lockdown restrictions lifting was completed on the 19th of July 2021. The interview consisted of fourteen questions, with the final question being that of anything extra the respondent would like to contribute themselves.

**Findings**

As the interview guide was designed in three main sections, the thematic coding and breakdown of data into themes was aided by this design. Hence, the next stage discussed will be identification of key codes which led to the curation of sub-themes and major themes presented throughout the interview data, contributing to the findings (Figure 1). The coding was accomplished by analysing a sentence and giving a code to each sentence in correlation with the common themes revealed in the open coding, the coding table was then curated. Similar codes were grouped together to form the sub-themes and major themes that are interrelated. Codes are generally imperative in analysing qualitative transcripts to understand the context (Burnard, 1991) and are curated through
the repetitious themes. With codes that were found not to be recurring as often, to not be assigned a theme, but still remaining to ensure the researcher maintained comprehension of the data provided by the respondent.

Figure 1: Key themes and sub-themes that emerged for the interviews

Figure 1 demonstrates the relationship between the key themes and sub-themes that will be discussed throughout this section. These key themes have been formulated and selected from the coded data analysis of transcripts. The themes presented and discussed are those that recurred frequently throughout the interview data from respondents.

Theme 1: Reason for setting up business from home
The first recurring theme to derive from the interview data are the explicit motives behind respondents setting up their business. The theme surrounding reasons for respondent’s setting up their business during the national lockdown were found to be the most discussed topic of the interview. With dialogue surrounding how social media and Instagram allow for their creative channels to excel and to brand their product for free. With discussion also touching on respondent’s having more spare time due to having to stay or work from home. These themes will be further discussed in the following sub-themes. The findings elaborate on the relationship between SMM and the national lockdown that ensured the establishment of the businesses explored. The findings suggest that all six respondents used Instagram over any other form of social media, such as Facebook, to market their products. As denoted in respondent 3’s answer below: “yeah, so I definitely use Instagram as my main marketing platform (...) as well as Facebook but definitely Instagram is the prominent one and that’s how I started on Instagram”.

Another reason that came to light for SMM on Instagram was the theme of communication tools and word of mouth (WOM) on the application. Firstly, the method of communication on Instagram being a prevalent reason for using the application to market and create discourse with consumers, using Instagram messenger. With respondents emphasising the ease of messaging and communicating with consumers. With reference to interactions with tools such as Instagram “stories” and “shares” on other pages. As respondent 2 infers gaining a following from other pages sharing their business page on their stories, increasing “reach” for more “followers”. Throughout the responses it is noted that respondents often referred to their customers as ‘followers’ and gaining a ‘following’; which is a common term when referring to a social media following. This leads to the instrument of word-of-mouth (WOM) in concurrence with communication tools on Instagram. WOM ties in with the photo sharing and gaining scope on the business through customer’s own discourse and platforms boosting the business. With respondent 3 emphasising WOM in exact terms: “my friends sharing that [a post of a product] on their Instagram story and then their friends seeing it (...) and their friends following me (...) and their friends buying something (...) their friends seeing that they bought something and follow me and buying something word of mouth is like (...) ridiculous for me”. Respondents were also asked about their personal usage of social media changing throughout the lockdown, in which respondents generally insisted that they had spent more time on social media in comparison to before the lockdown. With five out of six respondents saying they purchase more products on social media than before the lockdown. Contributing to the research that more people use social media to purchase products during the lockdown compared to the pre-COVID-19 period.
Theme 2: National Lockdown
The second theme found in reasons for setting up business, is the impact of the national lockdown restrictions implemented in March 2020. Focusing the timescale back to during the national lockdown, three out of six respondents reported the exact phrase, having “mixed feelings” towards the pandemic. With reference to how “lucky” they were to be able to set up their business from home during this time and formulate an “income”. Alongside their feelings towards the pandemic, respondents also displayed mixed answers as to what impact the pandemic had in relation to reasons for setting up their business from home. In fact, all six respondents stated they did not have the intentions of setting up their business long-term. With respondent 2 and 6 denoting two examples.

Respondent 2: “I never actually saw it as a business to begin with (...) I kind of just saw it as my Instagram account and then like I said I was quite shocked when people liked my items and wanted to get them”.

Throughout the responses touching on not initially planning to set up a business, there is also reference to the creation of products being a “hobby”. The term “hobby” was referenced in relation to reasons for setting up four out of six of respondents’ businesses. With all six respondents also referring to having more “spare time” that led to them finding new ways of filling this time with hobbies and other extraneous activities. This leads to the reasons for the other two respondents whose business did not begin as a hobby but began for other reasons in correlation to spare time. It was found in the interviews that alongside spare time, financial incentives of selling products online was a key reason in starting their business on Instagram. With suggestion of “pocket money” on the side of their job or whether they had to become reliant on the income from their business due to being out of work because of the impact of lockdown.

“so originally I was furloughed which was fine but then I realised that everyone got eighty percent of their salary but what this didn’t include (...) were things like tips and service charge … that’s why I thought it wouldn’t be enough to pay my rent and so it was quite a large pay cut for me”.

With respondent 5 claiming that their business was set up in the second lockdown due to spare time in-between jobs. Consequently, inferring that the business was set up to create an income until they received a successful job application due to being out of work because of the lockdown. As stated below by respondent 5 when discussing their financial situation and inability to be placed on the furlough scheme:

“it became more of a necessity than anything else cause I needed some extra income in the mean-time of trying to look for another job in a lockdown where you know people weren’t really hiring”.

Theme 3: Prospects- Perceptions of own business
Another main theme throughout the interview discourse focuses on prospects as national lockdown restrictions were lifted in the UK and if respondent’s perception of their business has changed from throughout the several implemented lockdowns. The respondents were asked about any success factors they had established throughout the process, enabling the context to be explored and comparisons to be made when asked about lockdown restrictions lifting (LRL).

With respondent 5 setting up their homemade candles selling business in October specifically with Christmas in the forefront as to why they set up their business:

“when I started it, it was late October I think and obviously that’s just round the corner from Christmas so in my head I just thought this could be a really good thing to tide me over for Christmas because (...) obviously candles are always (...) a good- an easy Christmas present”

The respondent highlighted the ability to post pictures of products on their Instagram “story” and “grid” and seek customer engagement using “giveaways” and “sales”. These factors ensured continuous customer engagement and increased scope throughout the lockdown. These success factors correlate with the outcome that respondents felt that their business generating a good income due to the fact people were spending more time online.

With half of respondent’s stating that their business is still “open” and three stating that they have kept their Instagram page open, however, their business is “closed”, to which they are not actively marketing their products anymore. With these three respondent’s implying that their business is closed unless a customer requests a product and they have time to produce this product. As respondent 1, who sells handmade face masks, gives an example:

“I suppose I have shut shop but if someone were to message me and be like please could you make me a mask I might be able to make a few but I just wouldn’t be able to support a large volume as before; but I suppose now, especially with the change in the government regulations with facemasks there’s just not really the need [for face masks] that there was this time last year and so I sort of don’t really see my business continuing past like September October 2021 time”.

The respondents who have detailed that their business is partially closed have also stated that they have left their Instagram page up and running to give them the chance “to go back” to marketing the business later. However,
when it comes to the three respondents who are still running their business, one premise they had in common was the fact they all worked from home throughout the lockdown. With all six respondent’s stating that, as restrictions are lifted, there is less time to invest into their Instagram business and they all noticed a decrease in sales. With respondents suggesting this being due to marketing their products less and also customers spending their money elsewhere as restrictions were lifted.

Discussion
This objective is in conjecture with the research question as to why respondents set up their business during a national lockdown. The findings conclude a snapshot insight as to why respondents created their business on Instagram instead of other social media platforms. The majority of respondent’s did not have the intention of starting a business yet used Instagram to market their products that began as a creative hobby. However, the spare time generated by either made redundant, furloughed or WFH ensured respondents had time to create these products and actively market them on Instagram. As respondents were questioned on their business as LRL, respondents stated a lack of time to produce as many products compared to before. This infers that spare time was a key motivator in starting a business from home. This research also found financial incentives and Instagram’s technological tools to also be motivators as to why businesses were set up on the platform during lockdown in the UK.

Questions around the respondents’ feelings towards both social media and the lockdown gave deep insight into the respondents’ personalities. Hence, several of the respondents stated their marketing role in their professional life, which enables them to utilise their skills in both areas. This objective gives some context to the overall study, with the entrepreneurial spirit being caused by the lockdown and extra spare time. This research has found that there were multiple reasons for setting up businesses from home, however, without the tools offered on Instagram and the spare time caused by the lockdown, the businesses would not have been curated. With the findings inferring that respondents initially saw their business as a creative outlet which in turn became a business on Instagram.

One of the key findings in this research was to find out if businesses will continue as LRL. The data implies that half of respondents have left their business completely open, with the other half closing shop, but leaving their Instagram page active. Leaving three respondents with a semi-open business. In conjecture to this, it was found that the three respondents who are confidently keeping their business open are the three respondents who have been WFH throughout the entire lockdown. All three respondents who have left it partially open have been furloughed and now are going back to work or education. Thus, although the research may not have come to a conclusive answer to if businesses will survive as LRL; there is a correlation found between the ability to WFH and run the Instagram business. With those to have to go into their place of work and education not actively continuing their business due to time constraints. This also infers the notion that the two who were furloughed used their business in order to create an income when the furlough was not enough, inducing a temporary time limit on their business.

Implications
This research offers some practical implications for the home-based business throughout the pandemic, with half of participants working in an industry that enabled them to WFH and the other half in the industry that did not. This reassures the literature that the pandemic and WFH created socioeconomic discrepancies which favour certain sectors of employment, as displayed by respondents’ financial situations. Furthermore, practical implications from the findings include the suggestion that WFH will benefit running an Instagram business. Whereas if a person must travel to their work destination this takes up the spare time that would otherwise be utilised in investing in the business. Furthermore, a practical suggestion arising from this research for the home-business is to ensure strong relationships with consumers through the direct messaging channel that Instagram offers. This can build trust amongst consumers and therefore, increase sales and income. To build a strong customer relationship, interactions via Instagram stories and posts will also ensure a validity desired by consumers before purchase. With mention of the photographic aspect of Instagram ensuring consumers can perceive what they are getting before purchase. Another insight gained is that the three respondents whose Instagram accounts are still open for business, also mentioned having an Etsy account. Hence, leading to the practical application for home-based businesses to sell their products across multiple platforms instead of Instagram alone.

Limitations and future research
Limitations to the research must be considered, with the first limitation that comes to light including the sample size. The sample size for this research project is limited to six respondents.
A larger sample size would offer both wider and deeper understandings into the research. Furthermore, with the results of three respondents (50%) leaving their business partially open, a larger sample would have ensured an enhanced understanding and conclusion to this research question.

Within this sample, the products of businesses were not considered in the effects that they would have on how well the businesses did as LRL. With one business offering face masks, this is a product that would affect the sales and progression of a business due to the change in restrictions in the UK. Thus, it is possible that the nature of the products sold influenced the respondents’ decision to close their shops. Also, the researcher understands that for future research purposes, a longitudinal study would be beneficial to answering the question of if these businesses will continue to be open as LRL. As this study was completed adjacent to LRL in July 2021, future studies would be able to investigate further if WFH and other contextual factors, such as the progression of COVID-19, have an impact on the businesses still open at the date of this research project. The future impacts of COVID-19 are uncertain, therefore, future research in the longitudinal sense would offer greater understanding and comprehension of what this research was aiming to explore.

Further potential for future research could also include the likes of investigating consumer trends in social media purchasing throughout the pandemic. With this research project offering insights from the business perspective; insights and research into consumerism during the pandemic could be beneficial to the literature. This would be useful as touched on in this research project, business owners felt that they also were spending more time on social media than before the pandemic. With the findings also indicating that respondents were spending less and saw a decline in online purchases as LRL, this could be investigated in further detail on a larger scale. Subsequently, this research could also have been completed on a larger scale, if a quantitative approach had been employed. A larger sample, derived from questionnaire completion, would present additional insights that should be considered.

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Gottlieb, C., Grob, O., and Poschke, M., (2020) Working from home across countries. COVID Economics, 8

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Analysis of B2B social media content: A qualitative approach based on firm resources and capabilities

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Abstract:
Digital platforms, such as social media, have become popular in Business-to-Business (B2B) markets by facilitating the interaction and the cooperation among buyers and sellers (Fraccastoro et al., 2021). Although the importance of successful branding through digital content in international marketing performance has been increased significantly (Gregory et al., 2019), a comprehensive model of business-to-business (B2B) content branding, based on firms’ digital resources (RBV) and marketing capabilities still does not exist (Pyper et al., 2020). This research tries to explore the impact of digital resources (RBV) and marketing capabilities on content branding within the B2B exports context. As a result, a framework is being developed to identify the relationship between the effective B2B branding strategies in the digital era under the spectrum of content marketing. The sample of this study consists of 15 leading international/exporting Greek B2B firms. Content analysis method is used to analyze the qualitative content data collected through social media platforms, Instagram, of the above study’s sample (Belanche et al., 2020). Qualitative results indicate that there is a proportionally relationship among the level of corporate resources/ capabilities, the overall brand awareness and export marketing performance. This research aims to fill a gap in the international branding literature concerning the effect of digital platforms on export marketing (Ozdemir et al., 2020) using current content marketing techniques based on RBV and firms’ capabilities. At the same time, this paper’s managerial contribution derives from the proposed matrix of capabilities, export performance and corporate branding via key digital platforms.

Keywords: B2B branding, digital content, exports, qualitative analysis, RBV

Introduction and Literature Review

The evolution of digital platforms has transformed the way businesses operate globally (Dagnino and Resciniti, 2021). At the same time, while the importance of websites as an international touchpoint is undeniable, social media are often used by exporting firms to reach out to global markets and to achieve enhanced brand loyalty with their customers by presenting their identity (Hayes and Kelliher, 2022). With Instagram being the most popular social media platform for business for achieving the highest level of engagement, co-creation and interaction with potential customers (Sukunesan & Selvarajah, 2020 and Alinasab, 2022), organizations have already started to include social media use for enhancing their brand image (Lam et al, 2019).

Originating in the B2C world, the importance of brands has never quite reached the same status for B2B companies (Lin et al, 2019), while the awareness of the social media use is still low in international B2B marketing context (Cartwright et al, 2021). Even today, international B2B companies still tend to underestimate the extensive power successful brands can have on the business by using social media through their published content for achieving high awareness, engagement with potential buyers and proceeding to their successful positioning into foreign markets (Cassia and Magno, 2019). Järvinen and Karjalnuoto (2015) state that firm’s
overall performance of social media is highly influenced by its content. Previous research presents that by using social media content into their international marketing strategy, B2B companies can significantly boost their overall global performance and brand awareness (Gregory et al, 2019).

For achieving even better results in export marketing and branding strategies, firms use their internal resources & capabilities, such as managerial commitment, firm experience, product uniqueness and technology tools (e.g. social media platforms) (Lin et al, 2019). Alinasab (2022) has stated that highly committed managers and experienced firms are more willing to support new marketing/digital tools during sales process, can identify quickly market needs, and when combined with product uniqueness level, they are able to gain a business competitive advantage. Gregory et al. (2019) have proceeded to analysis of export performance depending export-oriented capabilities such as a. marketing b. networking and c. internationalization capabilities. Moreover, Katsikeas et al. (2019) have proceeded to a first analysis of the firms’ resources and capabilities in marketing strategies depending each stage of the internationalization by using digital technologies and tools.

Although prior studies have analyzed separately the relationships among social media platforms, content branding and international performance, a comprehensive model of business-to-business (B2B) digital content branding, based on firms’ resources (RBV) and capabilities does not exist (Pyper et al, 2020). This research tries to explore the impact of resources (RBV) and capabilities on content branding within the B2B exports context. Specifically, the conceptual model of this study is drawn from current content marketing techniques, branding in the digital era and the internationalization of B2B firms for providing a more comprehensive understanding of international export marketing efficiencies through dynamic digital marketing channels such as Instagram. As a result, a framework is being developed to identify the relationship between the effective B2B branding strategies in the digital era under the spectrum of content marketing. The main research questions of this study consist of:

R1: What influence do exporters’ resources and capabilities have on international branding practices in a B2B context?
R2: To what degree can a B2B exporter benefit from effective content practices through digital platforms to attain enhanced brand image?
R3: To what extent qualitative content data contributes to the export marketing performance of B2B firms?

Methodology

The first stage of this research consists of the literature review – as presented above- on B2B social media content marketing, branding, resources/capabilities and internationalization. In the second stage, the paper proceeds to the design of this study. As a result, the sample of this study consists of 15 leading international/exporting Greek B2B firms (SEVE platform – Greek Exporters Association database), with significant extroversion and increased digital presence of their brand through posts’ publication on social media (Sukunesan et al, 2020). The main characteristics of sample are presented through Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>No. in Sample</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Industry</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Materials</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Industry</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistics</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of years (exports)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of countries abroad (presence today)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-50</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Media Platforms (Global Profiles)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative data are collected through the last three months’ Instagram posts of B2B exporting firms (Hallock et al, 2019), while key resources/capabilities qualitative information (Table 2) is gathered through the sample’s corporate pages/websites, annual digital reports and corporate announcements. The selection of this data type is influenced by Cartwright et al. (2021), who identify a significant gap of research methods used on the above research topics with 72% of existed literature using quantitative research methods, while only a 28% proceeding with qualitative methods.

Content analysis is used in this research having as unit of analysis the content posted on firms’ Instagram Page (Belanche et al, 2020). Each photo/post/visual is categorized regarding its main content (Mai and Liao, 2021). Adopted by the “The Instagram Check List Five dimensions of SME Instagram Marketing” of Sukusesan et al. (2020), firms’ overall brand evaluation of posted content is based on the category of brand awareness and its subcategory content marketing/visual communication having the following indicators (Table 2).

Table 2. Brand awareness - Content marketing/visual communication qualitative indicators (Sukusesan et al, 2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Content Presentation</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Quality / Quality content is honest, clear, and serves no hidden info</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Significance / Content attracts audience by being entertaining and useful/educational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Emotional Connection / Content is based on storytelling providing also space for your followers/users to be heard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Well Framed / The language and creative are well used for being relative to presented topic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Mix of Content / There is a blend of different content types published for attracting audience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The post description

- Suitable caption / Key message of caption is deliver through first sentence of description
- @Tagging / Post includes the appropriate tags for leveraging awareness
- #Hashtags / Relevant hashtags to post’s topic, audience and goal are used
- Geotags / Post uses geotags for indicating the location per country and boosting international presence of brand

For the evaluation process of above qualitative indicators, the Likert scale measurement 1 (lowest level) to 5 (highest level) is firstly used for the segmentation of high content brand value (>3.5 score), semi content brand value (from 3 to 3.5 score) and low content brand value (<2.5 score) of sample’s B2B firms. Moreover, an Overall Qualitative Brand Score per firm is presented for proceeding to the identification of the key practices and patterns according to firms’ resources and capabilities for internationalization (Table 3 below), while Figure 1 follows with the presentation of research’s process analysis and the result per phase (Hayes and Kelliher, 2022).

Table 3. Resources and Capabilities of research model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources &amp; Capabilities for internationalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Firm Experience (Years of exporting) (Lin et al, 2019 &amp; Alinasab, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Managerial Commitment (Corporate reposts of exports managers on social media) (Lin et al, 2019 &amp; Alinasab, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Networking level (Exports countries/partners) (Katsikeas et al, 2019 &amp; Gregory et al, 2019)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Process of data analysis and results per phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT ANALYSIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHASE 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating the data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHASE 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading the data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHASE 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-reading content data and patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHASE 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clusters' examination with firms' resources/capabilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings

For assuring the validity and reliability of presented results, two coders, with practical experience in the field of digital marketing and branding, were used originating 82% intercodary liability (Yaghtin et al, 2020). In total, 565 posts, published on corporate Instagram pages of the 15 B2B firms within last 3 months, are firstly evaluated based on the qualitative content marketing indicators of General Content Presentation and Post Description by Sukusesan et al. (2020). Regarding general content presentation (Appendix Table 1), 47% firms’ sample presents a high level of overall international brand image on their Instagram page (brand score > 3,5), 20 % operated with a good brand performance (brand score = 3 to 3,5), 27 % is characterized by moderate brand presentation while only a 6% is underperformed. In more details, the majority exporting B2B firms is trying to produce a general high quality of content with clear and honest message and good significance (more educational and useful content) for their key audience abroad by using appropriate language and creative per presented topic. However, only 13 % has achieved to present multiple content types (banner, video, 3D animation, technical advertorials, Q&As, manager profiles / speeches etc.) on their Instagram page. Unfortunately, 30% of sample firms still does not use different content posts’ types indicating that either these firms have not the appropriate resources and capabilities for developing them or their key audience is not requesting specific types of content at this phase. In terms of storytelling techniques used on the examined B2B contents, only four out of fifteen firms present with high level of narrative explanation for boosting their export image and overall brand performance. As for the post description qualitative indicators (Appendix Table 2), eight out to fifteen B2B (53%) examined firms use well defined captions with key delivery message in their first sentence of descriptions by presenting also the appropriate tags and hashtags for leveraging posts’ awareness. Finally, 40% of the sample is trying to include appropriate geotags for boosting their international brand image abroad. As a result, Figure 2 identifies the main patterns of content published within three months and relative qualitative content score per category (Appendix Table 1 and 2) in combination with content’s overall qualitative brand scores (Appendix Table 3).
The research continues with its Phase 3, where all above primary qualitative results are re-analyzed for proceeding to the micro analysis of this study presenting the key content clusters. Figure 3 illustrates the structure of the grouped sample into three key clusters according the frequency of their content published on corporate Instagram page and their overall average qualitative brand score. B2B firms in Cluster 1 are characterized as “The late beginners” presenting low content publication and relatively low overall brand score despite their efforts for brand promotion globally. Cluster 2 contains “The upcoming players” with rising communication strategy, frequent posts and a quite good qualitative brand score indicating their efforts for presenting a higher quality content globally. “The innovative communicators” consist cluster 3 in which the B2B firms present high communication level with their audience through their Instagram pages, very well framed content and multiple/innovative types of content using also techniques such as geotagging and global hashtags’ strategy.

**Figure 3. Content clusters analysis and structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Posts Range</th>
<th>Average Qualitative Brand Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 1 - The late beginners</td>
<td>B2B Firms with low level of published content often proceed to geotags's implementation for boosting their international brand image in targeted locations/areas.</td>
<td>0-25 posts</td>
<td>2.77 average qualitative brand score (F8-F11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 2 - The upcoming players</td>
<td>Caption of description is best performed when hashtags and tags are used for improving posts' brand awareness performance and overall value.</td>
<td>25-50 posts</td>
<td>3.4 average qualitative brand score (F1-F5, F12,F15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 3 - The innovative communicators</td>
<td>Post description has high impact on overall brand score value when combined with significance indicator.</td>
<td>&gt;50 posts</td>
<td>3.9 average qualitative brand score (F6,F7, F13,F14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, Figures 4-6 represent the clustering content analysis combined with B2B firms’ resources and capabilities (Appendix Table 4) for deeper understanding of RBV’s influence in overall export brand strategy and performance (Ozdemir et al, 2020). Results indicate that, for almost 47% of sample firms (Cluster 3-Innovative communicators), the higher the level of corporate resources and capabilities the higher the overall brand performance using right content on social media. Figure 4 compares firm’s capability in terms of international experience (years of exporting) with the cluster analysis depending content’s contribution on overall qualitative brand score (Cheng et al, 2021). As a result, a firm with many years of experience in international markets may have a deeper understanding of markets’ needs in terms of content creation and publication for boosting their overall brand image abroad. The same situation exists both with the networking level and managerial commitment of a B2B firm (Figure 5 and Figure 6). In more details, B2B firms with more than 50 export countries and high level of reposts by the exports managers present higher possibility of maximizing content awareness when their primary content is republished simultaneously through different/multiple sources (export partners’ social media and personal social media of managers). Regarding Cluster 2 of “The upcoming players”, managerial commitment, as part of firms’ resources, seems to contributes
positively when a B2B firm wants to upgrade its overall brand promotion (Figure 6), while the addition of new export countries helps “Late Beginners” of Cluster 1 to improve their overall export performance with new partners abroad (Figure 5).

**Figure 4. Firm Experience (Years of exporting)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Exporting</th>
<th>Clusters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;20</td>
<td>F7/F13/F14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>F1/F2/F12/F15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>F8/F9/F10/F11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5. Networking level (Exports countries/partners)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Networking Level</th>
<th>Clusters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;50</td>
<td>F15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-50</td>
<td>F8/F10/F1/F2/F5/F12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-20</td>
<td>F9/F11/F3/F4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6. Managerial Commitment (Average 3 months reposts)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managerial Commitment</th>
<th>Clusters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;50</td>
<td>F15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-50</td>
<td>F2/F3/F4/F5/F12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-25</td>
<td>F8/F9/F10/F11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

This study aims to fill a gap in the branding literature concerning the effect of digital platforms on export marketing (Ozdemir et al, 2020) using current content marketing techniques based on RBV and firms’ capabilities. Acknowledging that prior studies provide limited evidence on how various exported B2B firms should use branding and enhance it through their digital platforms when operating globally (Pyper et al, 2020), this paper contributes to theory by identifying some research voids in extant literature and providing an agenda for future research. The company-centred approach to B2B branding emphasizes the importance of unique components of brand value and their consistent communication abroad. At the same time, this paper’s managerial contribution derives from the proposed matrix of capabilities, export performance and corporate branding via key digital platforms. Practitioners can use the clustering and matrix analysis for the development of B2B international branding and marketing capabilities (Dethine et al, 2020) which could enable them to exploit their resources for optimal benefits for their international expansion. Finally, this research facilitates understanding of how exporting/international B2B firms can improve their global brand identity through an omni-channel approach. Future researches can be focused also on distinguish between corporate content (e.g., company generated content) posted through the organization’s platform, and in depth analysis of personal content (e.g., employee generated content) posted on personal profiles having more key indicators as the tone of the content including and the strategic focus (informative vs. problem-solving etc.) (Dagnino and Resciniti, 2021).
References:


**APPENDIX**

Table 1. General Content Presentation Evaluation (Brand Score 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firm</th>
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Table 4. Summary of findings

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Marketing Communications
How do University Rectors Communicate in Times of Crises such as COVID-19? A Sentiment-Based Study

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper examines insights into leadership communication at German public universities during the Covid-19 pandemic. It aims to answer the following two research questions: Did the communication of rectors and vice-rectors during the pandemic show signs of transformational, transactional, or servant leadership styles, and were there gender differences? Did the rectors communicate in a positive, neutral, or negative tone, and did this communication differ by gender?

Design/methodology/approach: We examine three leadership styles (i.e., transformational, transactional, and servant leadership styles) in a sentiment-based qualitative study of web-based data, such as online texts and verbal statements from publicly available communication channels. The significance of this study is to examine gender differences in text and verbal messages and also to understand how communication and social media reflect on leadership.

Findings: The findings support our hypotheses, and confirm gender differences: Women are more likely to have a transformational leadership style than men. Men are often attributed to transactional leadership characteristics. Furthermore, women’s communication is more favorable than that of male rectors and vice-rectors at German public universities, whilst communicating messages more positively has the power to encourage and inspire.

Research limitations/implications: The manually collected data (for an intense time period for public universities) appears to create the possibility that not all of the individual’s online communication statements are captured.

Practical Implications: The statements’ content appears mainly in German, and the tone and message may appear to be linguistic inconsistencies. All comments are translated into English by an online translator.

Originality/value: How women exercise leadership and publicly communicate in a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, has not yet been researched extensively. Workspace gender equality is an essential aspect of leadership, despite decades of regulation and intended interventions to ideally promote gender-equal representation in leadership positions. The findings positively contribute to the academic literature and encourage greater representation of women in leadership positions, as their potential remains untapped.

Keywords: Leadership, Communication, COVID-19, University, Crises
Introduction

Crisis are described as exceptional situations that could negatively impact organizations if not managed effectively (Abdul Samee & Tayyibah, 2010). These situations can disrupt important structures and require significant efforts to be resolved (Al-Khashali & Al-Quth, 2007). Crises are often unprecedented events, which means that organizations often lack the tools to mitigate the damage and therefore need to develop an effective strategy in a short time (Tarawneh, 2011). Leaders are in the spotlight in such situations, and future challenges must be handled continuously to avoid a backlog of pressing issues (Fener & Cevik, 2015; Lee & Welliver, 2018). At the same time, crises require appropriate expectation management, which can be expressed in leaders’ early warning of the situation (Garcia, 2006). Also, leaders need to ensure timely and transparent communication, with empathic behaviour, through appropriate communication channels with the stakeholders and exhibit that the leader is paying attention to the subordinates’ distress (Bundy et al., 2017; Hadley et al., 2011; Sobral et al., 2020). Male leaders’ perceptions of psychological safety are dominated by knowledge and control, while female leaders view it from a health and safety perspective (Kharlamenkov, 2015).

Furthermore, during difficult times, men seek solutions that focus on problem-oriented coping mechanisms with higher task-orientation (Ptacek et al., 1994; Kulich et al., 2018), whereas women typically resort to emotion-oriented coping mechanisms (Baker & Berenbaum, 2007). Also, women tend to express more positive emotions than men during times of adversity, which allow them to re-evaluate the negativity created by the crisis and develop a more adaptive behaviour in the face of psychological setbacks (Hulsheger et al., 2013). Leaders react differently in exceptional situations; while men tend to make less cautious decisions, women respond with more careful behaviour and restrain their actions (Lerner et al., 2003). Hence, effective leadership needs the right balance of collaborative behaviour, relationship building, and seeking assistance from others for both genders in times of crisis (Rosette et al., 2015). Public health crises, such as COVID-19, are characterized by uncertainty, and some behaviours will likely be inappropriate.

Leadership style and communication in times of crisis

The literature identifies a number of different leadership styles that can be adopted within the organization. Transformational and transactional leadership styles, which are often viewed as opposing, are the most studied, with servant leadership styles linking the two streams (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Greenleaf, 1970). The transformational style exhibits more collaborative traits, while transactional leaders show more agentic behaviour (Bass & Bass, 2008). A transformational leadership style first identified by Burns (1978) emphasizes the ability of leaders to foster motivation in their subordinates to contribute to the success of an organization through the use of vision and meeting their highest needs (Antonopoulou et al. 2021). A transformational leader thus acts as a role model, building trust among subordinates (Burns, 1978), exhibiting more collective traits (Bass & Bass, 2008), and being capable of provoking a strategic transformation (Tichy & Devana, 1986). By appealing to subordinates’ higher ideals and moral values, transformational leaders can raise their expectations to enhance organizational performance (Bass, 1986). Transformational leadership is driven by a vision that requires the commitment of subordinates to go beyond their self-interest and reach their full potential (Bass et al., 1996). Transformational leadership can be defined by its five key dimensions: 1) idealized influence (attributes); 2) idealized influence (behaviour); 3) inspirational motivation; 4) intellectual stimulation and 5) individualized consideration (Bass, 1986; Bass & Avolio, 1997). These five key dimensions demand leaders be trustworthy and develop an attainable vision (Bass, 1986; Bass & Avolio, 1997); inspirational and being able to communicate it (Humphreys, 2005); rational, careful and encouraging (Humphreys, 2005); and focus on the demands and needs of the individual (Antonakis et al., 2003).

Burns (1978) contrasted transformational leadership with transactional leadership and viewed them as opposites. The transactional leadership style can be characterized by two distinct factors: 1) contingent rewards; 2) management by exception (Bass, 1997). These two factors refer to leadership behaviours on rewarding resources and taking corrective actions because of deviations from stated standards (Bono and Judge, 2004). The former, known as management by exception-active, represents an active form of this leadership, which manifests itself in the leader's initiative to provide rewards once the followers have achieved the predefined goals (Antonakis and House, 2014). The passive form of transactional leadership, management by exception, refers to situations where the leader intervenes when problems arise (Antonakis et al., 2003).

A leader that combines the views of both transformational and transactional leaders follows the servant leadership style. According to Greenleaf (1970), a servant leader sets aside personal interests to benefit those being led. Servant leadership shares in common with the transformational style the vision, influence, credibility and trust characteristics (Farling et al., 1999).
The transformational style appears to be more effective in managing crises and their consequences than the transactional and the servant (Humphreys, 2005). Since women choose to follow a more transformational behaviour, it is reasonable to promote females in leadership positions in the face of adversity (Boehm et al., 2010). However, leaders must be creative, intuitive, and often improvise to manage a crisis (Pearson & Sommer, 2011). Women are the preferred leaders in turbulent times in all professions (Adams et al., 2009; Ashby et al., 2007; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly et al., 1995). Female leaders exhibit characteristics that enable them to adapt to uncertainty better than their male counterparts and better navigate uncharted waters (Haslam et al., 2001; Hunt et al., 1999; Pillai & Meindl, 1998; Ryan et al., 2011). Researchers have also shown that authoritarian use of power or demonstration of a dominant stance in communication can negatively affect subordinates' perceptions of female leaders, who view such leaders as untrustworthy (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Crisis require rapid adaptation to new circumstances and thus a flexible leadership approach and communication. Empathy, clear and transparent communication, and flexibility in immediately dealing with problems are just part of the essential behavioural characteristics that leaders must exhibit in adversity (Bundy et al., 2017; Hadley et al., 2011; Sobral et al., 2020). Both transformational and servant leadership styles are appropriate for such situations, as both are considered functional dynamic constructs for fast-changing environments (Gregory Stone et al. 2004).

Communication is also judged effective when it fits the situation and is perceived as consistent (Jablin et al., 1994). The way information is communicated could potentially awaken positive and negative emotions, resulting in improvements or possible adverse effects (James et al., 2011). Therefore, leaders must pay attention every day to how to formulate their words, framed through their experiences, emotions, and narratives, and help them interpret the unknown or unfamiliar information (Hajer, 1997). Due to the state-imposed lockdown; productive communication with the public became an important tool, while both states and organizations had to communicate with all interested parties transparently. Such adversities inevitably also affected the university environment and created incentives for action by university administrators because of their negative impact on student health and academic performance (Courtenay 1980; Junker 1987; Layde et al., 1980; Nichol et al., 2005; Sobal et al., 1978). The university leaders should provide information that contributes to student health literacy and ensure that students can find and evaluate resources, contact university staff through online channels, and access help and services related to recommendations from university staff and health authorities. The university leadership had to promote community-based pandemic preparedness strategies to empower students and staff (van den Broucke, 2020). Since students are more likely to access posts on social media, universities have also integrated various social media channels into their communication strategies to achieve their goals (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020; Quiros Flores et al., 2021). Even the German Rectors' Conference has set up a dedicated page on its website to report the latest news, regulations and impact of the crisis on studies, teaching and research (HRK, 2021). Storrie et al. (2010) suggest that information campaigns can be used to improve students’ knowledge, which would help them deal with the consequences of a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, the university’s staff should also be kept in mind when developing these communication strategies as they face the same challenges as the students (Sahu, 2020). Social media has always played an essential role in the crisis because it serves as a widespread channel of information and communication (Park et al., 2019). Organizations in various sectors have benefited from the quick interaction with stakeholders that these channels provide (Roshan et al., 2016, Veil et al., 2011). Such organizations are universities that use social media to communicate information in a timely, quick and open manner (Lund, 2019; Rutter et al. 2016; Peruta & Shields, 2017). Social media provides a unique opportunity for university stakeholders, as it allows for two-way communication.

The study's research question 1 is: Did the communication of rectors and vice-rectors during the pandemic COVID-19 show signs of transformational, transactional, or servant leadership styles, and were there gender differences?

Historically, leadership has been culturally associated with masculinity, making it difficult for women to move into leadership positions (Koenig et al., 2011), and if they wanted to succeed, they were expected to appear more dominant and masculine (Kawakami, 2000; Vanderbroek, 2010; Hoeritz, 2013). Aaldering & Van der Pas (2020) argued that gendered leadership stereotypes among Dutch politicians favoured male leadership traits. However, studies tend to attribute transformational leadership styles to female leaders, while men are often attributed to transactional leadership traits (Alimo-Metcalfe,1995; Young, 2004; Suranga & Mendis, 2017). The transformational leadership style is best suited for times of change (Young, 2004) and for managing crises (de Bussy & Paterson, 2012). Men are said to be more “task-oriented” (Eagly & Johnson, 1990) and, therefore, more suited to the transactional leadership style. Transactional leaders engage in simple bartering with others (Burns, 1978) as they prefer order, structure, and compliance. While transformational leaders engage in behaviours that drive their subordinates to achieve organizational goals, servant leaders trust their subordinates to act in
organization’s best interest (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Sims & Morris 2018). Therefore, we hypothesize that our results are consistent with previous research findings where female rectors and vice-rectors of public universities in Germany are more likely to use a transformational leadership style and less likely to use a transactional leadership style than men. Furthermore, since the transformational and the servant leadership styles are combined in this construct, we hypothesize that there are no significant differences between male and female rectors and vice-rectors. In other words, both genders are equally likely to exhibit the servant leadership style. So, our hypotheses are:

**Hypothesis 1:** The communication of female rectors and vice-rectors is more likely to exhibit signs of transformational leadership style than that of their male counterparts.

**Hypothesis 2:** The communication of male rectors and vice-rectors is more likely to exhibit signs of transactional leadership style than that of their female counterparts.

**Hypothesis 3:** The communication of male and female rectors and vice-rectors will exhibit signs of servant leadership style equally.

The study's research question 2 is: Did the rectors and vice-rectors of German public universities communicate in a positive, neutral, or negative tone during the COVID-19 pandemic, and did this communication differ by gender?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, authorities tended to communicate positively to reduce panic and build trust (Kaur et al., 2021). Leadership effectiveness and positive communication are closely related (Gkorezis & Bellou, 2016). Female leaders usually face a dilemma: to be respected by male subordinates, they must behave in a more masculine manner, which in turn leads to them being liked less, and female leaders who display more feminine traits are liked but not respected (Kawakami, 2000; Vanderbroek, 2010; Hoeritz, 2013). Therefore, female leaders need to show authoritative and sympathetic communication, whereas men only need to be authoritative (Kang et al., 2019). Some key traits of female leaders are strong communication skills (Lemoine et al., 2016); tend to express more positive emotions than men and exhibit more adaptive behaviour in the face of psychological setbacks (Hülsheger et al., 2013); and they appear more empathetic (Lemoine et al. 2016; Sergent & Stajkovic, 2020) as they tend to share and support others (Boneva et al., 2001). The decisive and clear communication style displayed by several female leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic has been widely praised in the media (Henley & Roy, 2020; McLean, 2020; Taub, 2020), with women portrayed as more competent and effective in dealing with the outbreak (Burni & Domgörge, 2021). Sergent & Stajkovic (2020) said that during COVID-19 female governors expressed more empathy and confidence as leaders in the United States. Therefore, we hypothesize that the sentiment-based analysis of rectors and vice-rectors to COVID-19 communication collected online will support previous research and be more positive than men.

**Hypothesis 4:** Female rectors and vice-rectors will exhibit more positive communication than male rectors and vice-rectors.

**Hypothesis 5:** Male rectors and vice-rectors will exhibit more negative communication than female rectors and vice-rectors.

**Method**

**Sample & data collection procedure**

We use a sentiment-based qualitative research method and analysis of web-based data, such as online text and verbal statements from publicly available communication channels, to examine the hypotheses. Given the increasing importance that university leadership places on social media (Barberá & Zeitzoff, 2018), we rely on collecting publicly available and accessible communication on COVID-19. Participants are rectors and vice-rectors of 86 German public universities listed on the German Rectors' Conferences (HRK) Higher Education Compass website (Hochschulkompass, 2021). We access University Websites (UW) and Google News (GN) together with LinkedIn (LI), Twitter (T), Facebook (F), and YouTube (YT) software platforms. All social media networks allow for direct reach, immediacy, and communication with the wider interested population, as each source can convey different messages or sentiments (Quinton and Wilson, 2016). The criteria to include a post on the research data are based on the following:

- the post needs to be from a German public university's active rector or vice-rector.
- the post must be published between 31 December 2019 and 31 March 2021.
- the communication needs to refer to the Covid-19 pandemic and be published in German or English.
We extract data from University and Google News websites in a pdf format. We also record from LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook in a word document for each platform, including the date of capture, source link and a screenshot of the original posts. YouTube videos are downloaded through the YouTube Premium account and then uploaded into NVivo 12’s transcription module, resulting in a word document. English and German posts, articles, and videos are collected and translated into German by deepl.com. In NVivo, a case is created per person and classified. All files are named according to a person's unique settled number, gender, communication channel and the corresponding sequence number. All content is uploaded into NVivo 12 software for coding and analysis purposes.

Coding procedure

As a methodology, sentiment has become increasingly popular to understand communication in online environments these days (Liu, 2010; Murthy, 2013), making automated sentiment coding and analysis of text-based opinions beneficial (Liu, 2010) and effectively used in various studies: Twitter (Reyes-Menendez et al., 2020; Kaur et al., 2021; Zimbra et al., 2018), YouTube (Amarasekara & Grant, 2019), Facebook (Caton et al., 2015), online newspapers (Shor et al., 2019), and many others. In the beginning, we analyze a sample of the extracted communications to create identifiers and cases for each of the four leadership dimensions, namely the boundary spanning, the nurturing human talent, the operations, and the social contribution. For each leadership dimension, we establish rules for coding the retrieved data. We use the results to develop a manual coding protocol and minimize deviations. All communications are coded into two subgroups. The first labelled "Covid for sentiment analysis", includes all COVID-19 communication from the specific period, and we classify each data file with the corresponding data source (University Websites, Google News, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube). The second subgroup is further divided into the four leadership dimensions of academic leaders identified by Banker & Bhal (2020). Each of the four dimensions of leadership communications falls under the transformational, transactional, and servant leadership styles (Legutko, 2020). Duplicate statements are deleted. Finally, examples and themes are collected to serve as a template for coding and to ensure the development of a coherent framework for crisis communication for further research.

Data Analysis

Since the coding of text-based opinions is subjacent to some subjectivity, we conduct the analysis starting with a sample of the extracted communications and creating identifiers and examples for each of the four leadership dimensions. As the themes of COVID-19 communication also vary within the dimensions, we primarily conducted a thematic analysis using the matrix coding query and crosstab queries in NVivo, which sets a link between communication and leadership styles and evaluates the hypotheses. In both queries, the attributes from the case classification are juxtaposed with the file classifications (data source), possibly selecting only data from a particular code or sentiment or vice-versa. Furthermore, concerning the sentiment in the communication of the selected leaders, we use queries in NVivo to produce reports with insights into the differences in sentiment between the two genders. We analyze each line of the leader's corresponding report, highlighting the dimension with the highest level of communication per coded word. All leaders with at least one recorded piece of communication are assigned to a leadership style consistent with the qualitative coding in NVivo and correspond to the literature review. We define the sum of the boundary-spanning plus the nurturing human talent dimension to account for the transformational leadership behaviour and compare it with the rest leadership styles.

Once the communication data is compiled and coded, we use NVivo to perform sentiment analysis for our research questions. In the NVivo, we run a query to examine the extent of each leader's communication style concerning the four leadership dimensions (Banker & Bhal, 2020). In addition, we conduct queries for the three most commonly used communication channels, namely the University Website (UW), Google News (GN) and YouTube (YT), and we manage to extract more detailed information on sentiment on these platforms. According to the analysis, we perform sentence-level sentiment analysis for each code. The sentiment of each code is then analyzed individually as part of the matrix coding query. The statements are classified as very negative, moderately negative, very positive, or moderately positive based on the last. To allow for better comparison, we calculated the sums of these two subgroups and displayed the information about negative or positive statements. We also conducted two sets of queries at different levels of granularity, such as gender analysis and communication channel analysis. The first query produced a report on the number of words coded ("words coded count"), the second on the number of files coded ("files coded count"). We subsequently divided the number of words coded by the number of files coded to obtain the "WCC/FCC" ratio. All percentages were calculated for all absolute numbers, allowing us to analyze and compare the collected data.
Results

Demographically, our sample includes all rectors and vice-rectors in German public universities who are present during the 15-month period covered by the research, both the recently elected and the predecessors. At German universities, the title of the rector and vice-rector may be replaced by the president and vice-president correspondingly. The study takes place in 86 public universities in German, where the total sample includes 436 participants. All of them are executives, of whom 61% (101) of the highest offices are presidencies, and 39% (335) are rectorates. The rectors are 23% and the vice-rectors 77% of the sample. In matching the gender with the highest leadership positions in German universities, the breakdown by gender is 29% for women and 71% for men for rectors and 40% and 60% for vice-rectors. See Table 1 for additional demographic characteristics.

Table 1: Participant's gender and position allocation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Rectors</th>
<th>Vice-Rectors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Num. %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis shows that during the 15-month time frame, not all people maintained their positions, as there are cases where their mandatory period expired. Supporting the gender with the mandate period on holding the administrative role, the gender distribution which had the office for the entire 15-month period is 22% for women and 78% for men for rectors and 37% and 63% for vice-rectors respectively, while for less than 15-months is 48% women and 52% men for rectors and the same proportion for vice-rectors (Table 2).

Table 2: Split according to the duration of their mandate period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Entire 15-months period</th>
<th>Less than the 15-months period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>Rectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>108 (33%)</td>
<td>17 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>215 (67%)</td>
<td>59 (78%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>323 (100%)</td>
<td>76 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, there appear to be university leaders with no communication data. Content availability varies significantly between rectors and vice-rectors. In contrast, on average, only 4% of rectors do not publish any data relating to COVID-19, while approximately 40% of vice-rectors do not communicate anything related to the pandemic. The sample's relatively low representation of vice-rectors' content may be since vice-rectors are responsible for different departments, and their communication may not be as relevant to stakeholders. For example, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the vice-rectors of teaching and studies, or digitalization, were more relevant to the present situation and conditions than the vice-rectors of internationalization or diversity.

A total of 2,772 pieces of data are collected to conduct the communication analysis. We gather 1,985 data from male rectors and vice-rectors, representing approximately 72% of the total data; thus, the rest, 28%, comes from female leaders (Table 3). The male rectors and vice-rectors sample constitutes 76% (1214) and 65% (711) of collected data. Simultaneously, the sample of female rectors is approximately 24% (376), and of female vice-rectors, 35% (411). Thus, the analysis shows that the use of communication channels by rectors and vice-rectors is proportional to the gender distribution in the sample. Also, we here observe the popularity of the communication channels, as the most frequently used communication channel by all subgroups of the sample is the university website, followed by Google News and YouTube.

Table 3: Communication channels data availability according to the mandate and gender (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R (Fem.)</th>
<th>R (Male)</th>
<th>V-R</th>
<th>V-R (Fem.)</th>
<th>V-R (Male)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UW</td>
<td>1108 (40%)</td>
<td>329 (30%)</td>
<td>779 (70%)</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>180 (26%)</td>
<td>519 (74%)</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>149 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GN</td>
<td>712 (26%)</td>
<td>179 (25%)</td>
<td>533 (75%)</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>77 (19%)</td>
<td>320 (81%)</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>102 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>499 (18%)</td>
<td>168 (34%)</td>
<td>331 (66%)</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>80 (41%)</td>
<td>114 (59%)</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>88 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>92 (3%)</td>
<td>26 (28%)</td>
<td>66 (72%)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>35 (95%)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>24 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>17 (1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>17 (100%)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>17 (100%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YT</td>
<td>344 (12%)</td>
<td>85 (25%)</td>
<td>259 (75%)</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>37 (15%)</td>
<td>209 (85%)</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>48 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>2772 (100%)</td>
<td>787 (28%)</td>
<td>1985 (72%)</td>
<td>1590</td>
<td>376 (24%)</td>
<td>1214 (76%)</td>
<td>1182</td>
<td>411 (35%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We explore the sentiment in leaders' communication at the universities following the analysis. We conduct two sets of queries at different levels of granularity (gender analysis, communication channel analysis). The first query produces a report on the number of words coded (WCC—words coded count), while the second generates a similar report on the number of files coded (FCC—files coded count). Then, we divide the number of words coded by the number of files coded to obtain the "WCC/FCC" ratio. Percentages are calculated for all absolute numbers. The ratio allows us to analyze and compare the collected data. The sentiment analysis results show the different sentiment levels, from negative to positive. The negative sentiment consists of the sum of the very negative and the moderately negative. In contrast, the positive sentiment is the sum of the very positive and the moderately positive sentiment. As a result, the sum of both of them is 100%. Our analysis also shows that the three most popular communication channels are university websites, Google News, and YouTube.

The tone of communication varies in the intensity of sentiment across the different communication channels. Female leaders' communication is more balanced, 48% negative and 52% positive, than their male counterparts, 56% negative and 44% positive. Furthermore, in all selected media, male leaders' communication is negative; 52% in UW, 67% in GN and 54% in YT. On the contrary, female leaders' communication appears positive in all selected communication channels; 52% in UW, 53% in GN and 56% in YT. Also, the results show that the information disseminated through University websites is the most balanced among these three communication channels for both genders. Thus, in the UW, the males' communication is positive at 48% and negative at 52%, while the females' communication is 52% positive and 48% negative; in the GN, the males' is 33% positive and 67% negative, and the females' is 53% positive and 47% negative. Finally, in the YT, the males' communication is 46% positive and 54% negative; simultaneously, the females' is 56% positive and 44% negative. At the same time, both genders also have the highest average sentiment intensity, which is represented by the percentage of negative or positive sentiments.

Moreover, the data retrieved from Google News shows the most significant difference in sentiment between female and male leaders. While women communicated mostly positively (53%), men's communication was the most negative (67%) among this study's three most popular platforms. However, this communication channel presents the lowest proportion of very negative and very positive sentiments, indicating more moderate and neutral communication. Furthermore, the analysis of the data retrieved from YouTube shows mixed results. While women avoid text-based expressions and opinions with a very negative sentiment, their communication collected on YouTube contains the most very positive statements. The male leaders do not refrain from conveying very negative messages in their video communications. Their communication tends to be more negative, albeit more moderate than the women on all platforms.

Discussion of findings

The first research question aims to distinguish and determine any possible differences between the leadership styles of men and women as rectors and vice-rectors in German public universities. While the communication of both genders shows transformational leadership behaviour, the findings show it is more prevalent among women than male leaders. The last confirm Hypothesis 1 and is consistent with previous studies that have found transformational leadership is more prevalent in women than men (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1995; Young, 2004; Suranga & Mendis, 2017). Both genders maintain all characteristics of transformational style through all communication channels and exhibit this behaviour while managing extreme crises and supporting organizational changes. Female university leaders determine their communication more with the transformational style and approach their followers by inspiring positive changes and visions.

However, the analysis of communication data of rectors and vice-rectors also shows that males are more inclined towards a transactional leadership style than females. The data supports and verifies Hypothesis 2 and is consistent with previous studies that have found that men are more likely to be attributed with transactional leadership traits (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1995; Young, 2004; Suranga & Mendis, 2017). Therefore, male university leaders are more inclined toward a transactional leadership style than women; while in periods of crises or aggressive changes choose to focus on short-term goals, exult in following rules to do things correctly, and tend to be inflexible. Yukl and Mahsud (2010) nevertheless argue that a flexible leadership style lately has become increasingly popular, where leaders would be able to integrate innovations and overcome challenges and achieve their goals. Thus, men would change their leadership approach in times of crisis to respond to uncertainty and unpredictability; as the transformational leadership style is best suited for times of change (Young, 2004) and for managing crises (de Bussy & Paterson, 2012).

On top of that, the data analysis demonstrates there is no significant difference between genders in representing the servant leadership style of German university leaders. The representation through the communication channels of this leadership style is the lowest, with the results being too low to provide a proper scientifically result. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is inconclusive that both genders rectors and vice-rectors of German universities...
exhibit equal signs of servant leadership behaviour. In theory, all public university leaders should show a higher level of servant leadership as they focus on demonstrating the highest level of accountability to their students and the university’s population (Adda et al., 2020). However, in terms of communication, individual leaders tend to adopt a more personal leadership behaviour, especially given the high level of uncertainty from the pandemic crisis. Despite the no-conclusive evidence, the servant leadership style still proves to be an essential style that deserves further investigation, especially in the university context.

In times of crisis, such as the pandemic COVID-19, people's uncertainty increases the fear for their future. Therefore, many rely on the words and actions of leaders to reassure people and help them cope emotionally (Mendy et al., 2020). The analysis results show that the communication of female rectors and vice-rectors was positive across all channels, which supports and verifies Hypothesis 4. The hypothesis is consistent with previous research findings that women leaders are more likely to communicate positively during difficult times (Hülsheger et al., 2013), appear to be more empathetic and supporting (Boneva et al., 2001; Lemoine et al., 2016; Sergent & Stajkovic, 2020), and are more competent and effective in dealing with COVID-19 (Burni & Domgörgen, 2021) as strong communication skills are the key trait of female leaders (Lemoine et al., 2016) they. Of course, it is essential to note that communication in a crisis tends to attract negative bias, as topics with negative connotations are amplified (Chou & Budenz, 2020; Chang et al., 2020). Therefore, leaders need to give more importance to the way they frame their communication, in the guise of how and what one says can evoke different emotions from the audience (Nutt, 1998; James et al., 2011), and all necessary information should be communicated frequently, clearly, and simply.

Across all platforms, the communication of male rectors and vice-rectors exhibited a more negative sentiment than that of females. Sentiment varied by the communication channel, with Google News being the channel with the strongest negative sentiment. Hypothesis 5 is thus supported by the data and is consistent with previous research showing that male leaders tend to be more task-oriented, less empathetic, and appear to be more to the point in their communication (Zahn, 1989; Lemoine et al., 2016; Burni and Domgörgen, 2021). Finally, the analysis deduces an interesting finding relating to the rectors' and vice-rectors' presence length. During the 15-month period of this study, there is an increase in the number of female representation in both of these posts before and after the COVID-19 crisis. The particular change reflects gender equality in leadership positions and the "glass cliff" phenomenon, which states that women are often appointed to leadership positions to bear the burden of adversity (Peterson, 2015). In addition, women are often associated with the transformational leadership style, which is more effective than the transactional leadership style in an ever-changing environment (Gregory Stone et al., 2004). The pandemic crisis is characterized by a high pace of change associated with timely and appropriate communication. Since crises require empathy from leaders, women consider being the more empathetic and better suited in the current times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

References


Communicating sustainable fashion on social media

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Abstract:
This paper aims to examine the role of communication in promoting sustainable fashion among Fashion Pact companies and investigate the promotional strategies they use to communicate sustainable practices. By reading through the website and social media communications for each brand, it was positioned in one of four categories. It is crucial, to begin with, the website as the brands typically communicate their communications there. Low Commitment – While the definition of Low Commitment is low sustainability and low communications of generally infrequent isolated, occasional, and non-long term efforts, many brands were placed in the low commitment quadrant for simply having low long-term efforts that focused solely on the well-being of employees or another aspect of the supply chain. Low commitment also focuses on low efforts of sustainability by means of long-term actions. The chart for Websites and Social Media is an average of the placement of the Website chart and Social Media chart for each brand. Taken into consideration were the sustainability efforts made on the website and the points that were addressed on social media. If the sustainability efforts were high and communicated on the website, but the social media communications were simply on the sustainable collections and material, then the brand was given less credit for communications on the basis that they are not communicating the most important sustainability components that are featured on their website. This skewed the brand lower on the communications axis. Social media does not communicate the sustainability efforts pertaining to the supply chain or the brand’s operations. The communicated efforts are tangible to the consumer, including their sustainable apparel collections and the quality material they are made from. Brands do generally not have a corporate social media page. However, if they do, the sustainability efforts of their operations, supply chains, and stores are more likely to be communicated there (e.g. H&M Group and Gap Inc.). Mass Market brands have minimal sustainability communication efforts. Communications mainly relate to the brands sold by the retailer/department store (e.g., Galeries Lafayette, MATCHESFASHION, Nordstrom, and Selfridges Group). Unique find: Inditex owns eight brands. Of those brands, six brands offer the Join Life Collection, which consists of sustainably made products and explains the brand’s individual efforts towards sustainability. Opinion: Sustainability does not align with the brand image of luxury brands. Perhaps sustainability does appeal to high-income individuals.

Luxury brands typically promote by directing consumers to their corporate websites for sustainability insights, which are generally limited to sustainability in the supply chain. Stella McCartney is a very different brand. She is a lifelong vegetarian that incorporates sustainability and animal/environmental protection into her brand. Stella McCartney incorporates sustainability into product collaborations with brands including Adidas and Hunter. Zara is just above High Marketing and moving its way into High Commitment. Perhaps this is because Inditex has been under fire before for the authenticity of its sustainability efforts. Inditex seems to be focusing on incorporating more sustainability and communications into Zara, given that it is its most significant and prominent brand. Generally, holding groups tend to put more focus on sustainability in their more extensive and more profitable brands. More significant could be in terms of revenue, the number of stores, or market share. It seems as if the smaller the brand in the group, the less the brand will communicate on the website and social media. The largest brand will convey sustainability efforts for certain holding groups, while the other brands will not communicate efforts at all. Given its popularity, we can assume that higher revenue represents a bigger portion of the parent company and possesses larger reachability to consumers. This has been seen in brands including Kering (e.g. Gucci), Inditex (e.g. Zara), H&M Group (e.g. H&M), Prada Group (e.g. Prada), and PVH Corp. (e.g. Tommy Hilfiger)

Keywords: Luxury fashion brands, social media marketing, sustainability.
Reducing inequalities with sustainable brand communication: learning lessons from brand scandals

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Keywords: brand scandal, sustainable brand communication, inequalities, diversity and inclusion marketing, marketing and communication ethics.

Introduction

The research project focuses on providing guidelines for the brands to serve the discriminated members of both developed and developing nations. It is because sometimes brands (un)knowingly highlight such inequalities for their benefits through their marketing efforts that may face unpredictable consumer attitudes. Such reality derails consumers’ pre-scandal perspectives about the brand and ultimately damages the entire distribution channel, including consumers (Kapoor et al., 2022). While brand evangelists may continue to reincarnate a favorable brand image, others affected by the brand’s deeds may disengage with it. Thus, this study primarily focuses on understanding the impact of an ethical brand scandal on consumers' attitudes about the brand. The insights about these impacts on consumers would be catered from multiple sources - offline and online. Through retailers as they are connected to both the ends of the supply chain. So, they may be the first source of physical interaction by the consumers. However, consumers may directly portray their support/disappointment by venting out on social media. Both these sources are crucial to have an exhaustive understanding of the effect of an ethical brand scandal on consumers’ behavior.

Going a step further, consumers are always eager to discover the brand’s effort after the negative news about the brand outpours. It further reassures consumers that the brand cares about them and is willing to respond to the controversy cloud curated in their minds. Recently, Kapoor & Banerjee (2021) also posit that corporate actions do aid in rebuilding consumers’ brand trust and further reincarnate their belief to identify with the brand, especially for those with high pre-scandal self-brand identification. Thus, marketers’ efforts to reduce such inequalities should not be overlooked.

The study also majorly focuses on investigating ways in which brands communicate their sustainable efforts in case of a brand scandal. Many famous brands like Nike, Apple, and Parle-G (2019) have been unethically using child labor in their production factories. Besides, other brands like Nestle, Amazon, Tesco, and ASDA Walmart have also been caught in ethical scandals (Tim Hunt, 2018). Thus, it is crucial to analyze such ethical brand scandal cases to understand the issues and develop strategies to be adopted.

Brands have made efforts like legal processes, arbitration, or rituals to recompense for the original breach to re-build its reputation after such an ethical scandal (Sims, 2009). However, these strategies are applied post-brand scandal. There is an utmost need to adapt sustainability as a core value in a brand’s value system. Especially for the weaker or unprivileged sections of our society, the situation has worsened with the covid-19 pandemic, leading to increased income inequalities and reduced availability of basic facilities and amenities (SDG’s 2021 report- Goal 10). This aggravated our focus on the United Nations- sustainable development goal ten about reducing inequalities within and among countries. There are multiple reasons that a brand may not consider sustainability as an essential goal in their brand value system. It may not wish to be portrayed as a brand for the weaker section of the society, or a brand that may include the less privileged as part of its brand but not empower them, or it may prefer to stay silent about sharing its good deeds of reducing the inequalities. People belonging to the unprivileged class face issues for attaining necessities. Thus, there is a need to lay down ways of communicating such supportive efforts by the brands. These will make the needful aware as well able to take the benefits of their reach and offering. Sustainable contributions by brands shall act as a catalyst for those with no means of uplifting themselves. Accordingly, our research focuses on analyzing sustainable strategies to be adopted by brands that do not practice sustainability in their regime.
Under the broad umbrella of brand wrongdoing, researchers have widely used and defined brand controversy (Banerjee, 2018) and brand crisis (Bundy et al., 2017; Dawar and Lei, 2009; Kim and Jin, 2016; Vassilikopoulou et al., 2009). The brand controversy results from how wrongdoing is communicated, thus creating a flow of information that shapes the issue (Banerjee, 2018). Brand crisis happens because of an organization’s inability to mitigate wrongdoing through actions and communication (Pauchant and Mitroff, 1992). In other words, the way communication about wrongdoing spurs often creates brand controversy. It may result in a controversy cloud (Banerjee, 2018), which, if not addressed, is often considered a brand scandal from the consumers’ perspective. Additionally, organizations that fail to address consumers’ concerns during a brand scandal often face a change in consumers’ attitudes towards their brand, leading to a brand crisis. Thus, we define a brand scandal as an issue that results in either a consumer losing confidence entirely in the brand (Wang and Alexander, 2018) or having second thoughts on purchasing the brand.

Brand scandals are classified into value-related scandals and performance-related scandals (Dutta and Pullig, 2011). Value-related scandals are concerned with the brand’s ethics and principles, while performance-related scandals comprise a brand’s capability to offer functional benefits (Dutta and Pullig, 2011; Pullig et al., 2006). Additionally, a brand with harmful values leads to greater consumer dissociative responses than a brand with performance failures (Liu et al., 2018). Therefore, this study sets to perform collaborative research to inculcate a perspective on reducing inequalities within and among countries by leveraging sustainable actions of marketers. Furthermore, we want to explore how learning from mistakes impacted further actions in those brand cases that faced diversity and inclusion scandals.

Literature background and gaps

Our literature background covers multiple topics, such as brand scandals, diversity and inclusion marketing, sustainability communication, crisis communication and marketing ethics. This research project plans to perform a structured literature review in search of theoretical roots of value-related scandals, in particular selecting ethical and social sustainability related brand scandals, with a specific attention to diversity and inclusion communication. Our preparatory study already suggests six research steps, four on the consumers’ side, and two on the marketers’ side. An overview of initial literature gaps, literature review and selected research methodology is presented in tab. 1. This paper aims to present this research project, to be performed in the next phases.

Tab. 1 Project design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research steps and main objectives</th>
<th>Literature review and gaps</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To analyse the consumer perceptions in the case of brand scandals.</td>
<td>Consumers are the survival strength of a brand. Previously, researchers focused on studies related to post crisis scenarios and its impact on consumers (Cleeren et al., 2017). Various studies on how consumers respond in case of a crisis have already been explored (Antonetti et al., 2019; Dean, 2004; Jeon and Baeck, 2016). However, a crisis is an unpredictable event that threatens the expectations of stakeholders and ultimately pose a physical threat to its physical existence (Coombs, 2014). While crisis involves studying a wrongdoing from organizational perspective, scandal involves understanding it from a consumer perspective. Kapoor &amp; Banerjee (2021) recently studied the phenomenon of a performance-based scandal and its impact on consumer attitudes. It involved reviewing literature on brand scandal of last four decades. It further showcases an increase in number of articles on brand scandal from 2015 onwards. There have been a lot of studies previously on brand crisis and performance-based scandals. Besides there is paucity of literature on ethical brand scandals. Case-study analysis of ethical brand scandals like Volkswagen have been researched but from a</td>
<td>We would adopt a survey methodology and frame a broad structured questionnaire to grasp consumer responses. Scales for this questionnaire would be adopted from literature. To analyze the responses structural equation modeling (SEM) would be undertaken.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Gap</td>
<td>Literature Review (Why)</td>
<td>Methodology (how)</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>To investigate the</td>
<td>When a brand scandal takes place it impacts the entire distribution chain, including consumers. Channel members in a distribution chain bridge the gap between a consumer and marketer. They are connected with consumers and marketers directly. In general, a consumer interacts with a local grocery retailer twice or thrice a week. They enter into multiple discussions building an emotionally strong consumer-retailer relationship. When the functionality of a product is in question, retailers become the first source of physical enquiry for consumers. Recently, Kapoor et al. (2022) propagated that retailers do hold an influential role especially in the case of a performance-related brand scandal. Existence of such an influence in case of an ethical scandal is not yet investigated.</td>
<td>Grounded theory methodology shall be adopted to copulate the theory out of the data. This shall be done with a phenomenology perspective and a case study approach.</td>
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<tr>
<td>influential role of</td>
<td>To explore the effect of social media influencers about brand scandals on consumers.</td>
<td>This research gap shall be explored using a survey method. A broad questionnaire shall circumvent the influential capabilities of social media on consumers during and post a brand scandal. Additionally, content analysis of the information shared over the social media about the brand and brand scandal by the consumers shall be analyzed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>traditional channel members</td>
<td>Consumers are receptive to information from various sources involving both traditional and modern means of communications. The omnipresence of consumers on multiple social media platform exposes them with abundant information (Kapoor and Banerjee 2021). This information transforms into belief especially when supported by their trusted social media influencers. Interactions via different social media brand communities bolster and maintain consumer-brand relationships (Liu et al., 2018). When negative news about brand is funneled through social media platform, it spreads from one person to another with a snowball effect. People tend to spread negative news more rapidly than positive news (Baghi and Gabrielli, 2019). A consumer may act against a brand for damaging their brand trust. On the contrary, it may support the brand for the value it possesses. It can reasoned with the consumers’ self-identification with the brand that ultimately leads to favorable brand perceptions (Kapoor and Banerjee 2021). Thus, consumers’ response is unpredictable and we aim to understand the role of social media influencers in affecting consumer attitudes in the case of ethical brand scandals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>about the brand</td>
<td>To inquirer about the effect of corporate action on consumers’ views in case of brand scandals.</td>
<td>The importance of corporate action shall be validated through a separate segment in the broad questionnaire. Similarly, analysis of the data shall be done using SEM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scansals on consumers.</td>
<td>Previously there have been a lot of primary and secondary response strategies developed but in the case of a crisis. While primary strategies involve recalling, denial, scapegoating, compensation, and apology; secondary response strategies involve reminder, ingratiatiation and victimimage (Coombs, 2007). Mishra (2017) propagates that for effective corporate actions, an organizations’ response should be consumer-centric and not based on scandal type. However, we contradict by investigating the influential role of corporate actions on consumer attitudes in a different type of scandal (value-based) compared to an existing study on performance-based scandal (Kapoor et al., 2021).</td>
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communicate their sustainable efforts before and after an ethical scandal. An utmost need to adapt sustainability as a core value in a brand’s value system. Especially after these unforeseen times of the covid-19 pandemic, for the weaker or unprivileged sections of our society, the situation has worsened with the covid-19 pandemic, leading to increased income inequalities and reduced availability of basic facilities and amenities. There are multiple causes that brands may not consider sustainability as an essential goal in their brand value system, especially when it deals with international marketing strategies. Sometimes brands (un)knowingly highlight inequalities for their benefits through their marketing efforts that may face unpredictable consumer attitudes. This unethical communication is often a cause for brand scandal (Wang and Alexander, 2018; Kapoor et al., 2021). Such reality derails consumers’ perspectives and ultimately damages the entire distribution channel, including consumers and the society in general. Thus, this project is focused on reducing inequalities within and among countries (SDG’s Goal 10) through a better brand communication. Study methodology. As single case study limits the generalizability of the results (Mena et al., 2009). These case studies shall be selected from the industry with higher number of scandals-consumer goods. Additionally, in-depth interviews with marketing managers of the same company shall be undertaken whenever necessary. To analyze the learnings by mistake of a brand to avoid future brand scandals. This objective aims to evaluate the impact of sustainability related brand scandals on consumers' beliefs and behaviour. Both online and offline sources are crucial: while brand evangelists may continue to reincarnate a favourable brand image, others affected by the brand’s deeds may disengage with it. It may result in a controversy cloud (Banerjee, 2018), which, if not addressed, is often considered a scandal from the consumers’ perspective. Furthermore, there is an unrevealed potential educational role of brand scandals analysis. Thus, it is important to unravel the lessons learned from brand scandals and the educational role of sustainable communication. To discover the preventive measures that brands should practice in order to avoid being caught in a scandal or a subsequent scandal by the same company, we shall apply qualitative methodology. In-depth interviews with marketing managers of the brands that have faced a scandal shall be undertaken. We shall then develop appropriate measures by scrutinizing these interviews and copulating a theory out of the data collected using grounded theory methodology.

<table>
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<th>Our research design covers multiple perspectives, which in tab. 1 logically started from the consumers’ side because, in protecting their important values, consumers are gaining more and more power in their relationships with brands. The market is sometimes driving a change, but many companies still play a crucial role in sustainability education. So, we will touch the two sides sequentially, starting from the managerial side rather than the consumer side, reversing the importance of these two players, to put the marketers’ role in priority because they are responsible of brand communication efforts. Our two main research questions wants to help companies in finding the right solutions in adopting sustainable communication for reducing inequalities, also learning from past scandals and failures. Our main research questions are as follow:</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1. How brands can reduce inequalities through sustainable communication practices, before and after a brand scandal?  
2. What lessons learned from mistakes can overcome this kind of sustainability-related scandals in the future? |
Methodology

The study applies a mixed-method approach to achieve its objectives. A mixed-method approach involves the adoption of both qualitative and quantitative means of research for a particular study (Filipe et al., 2017). A qualitative approach helps to understand the prevailing scenario or the existing reality. While a quantitative approach aids in validating the current reality. Selected research methods are suggested in tab. 1, while research approaches are described below.

The study initially applies a qualitative technique involving grounded theory methodology. It aims majorly at copulating theory from the data collected (Connell and Lowe, 1997). We achieved this by developing broad research questions exhaustive of the unexplored domain. The data collection revolves around these research questions, eventually cultivating into a theory. Time-taking activities like brainstorming and mental mapping of these broader research questions to build a questionnaire for in-depth interviews are crucial. We use the phenomenology approach for framing the central questions. In this, questions are broadly stated without specific reference to existing literature or a typology of questions. Moustakas (1994) held that phenomenology addresses questions catering to what the participants experienced and in what context or situation they experienced (Glaser and Strauss, 2017). Thus, in-depth interviews will be conducted with marketing professionals of Italian internationalized companies, present in both Italy and India. We selected these two countries not to compare them, but to explore if multicultural aspects and distant cultures have any influence in actions and reactions. Additionally, our study involves utilizing multiple case studies wherein sub-questions (related to the broad research question) pertain to the description of the cases, and emerging themes are also studied. Once the theoretical model representing the theory is framed, it may then be validated through hypothesis testing later.

Subsequently, to understand from a consumers' perspectives, we may adopt a quantitative tool - survey methodology. A questionnaire shall be circulated amongst consumers of the brands across both countries to understand the differences and similarities in their attitudes in case of an ethical brand scandal. The results could be empirically validated by using Structural Equation Modeling (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Arbuckle and Wothke, 1999). Additionally, the understandability of consumers' attitudes shall be further enriched from the other channel members of the supply chain, both offline and online means. In other words, we may enquire retailers- offline source and also analyze consumers’ reactions on social media- online source. These shall act as a confirmatory substance to the actual consumers’ attitudes obtained from the survey.

Expected findings

The outcomes of this research project will be beneficial for both academicians as well as marketers. The way consumers behave and perceive a brand in case of an ethical brand scandal will enrich the literature as well as guide marketers to be prepared on how consumers might react to their marketing efforts.

Additionally, the study copulates ways in which marketers have communicated their sustainable initiatives in the past to consumers to survive a value-based scandal. This theorized model may become an avenue of empirical validation for future researchers. Moreover, it shall act as a blueprint to marketers willing to include social sustainability as a part of their brand’s values and deeds. Apart from the theorization of this model, ways through which marketers have communicated strategies to consumers shall be discussed. The study majorly focuses on highlighting the sustainable brand actions that are recognized and appreciated by consumers. These may aid a brand in preventing an ethical-brand scandal in the future.

Furthermore, the study lays down the impact of an ethical brand scandal as well as strategies adopted thereafter on consumer attitudes. Besides, multicultural and international marketing considerations will aid marketers in bolstering their brand position across nations. It would also enable a brand to be prepared about the possible consumer reactions in the case of an ethical brand scandal. Marketers shall gain insights about the importance of global supply chain members and ways to leverage them to reach the underprivileged. This would help brands to leave an impression in the mind of consumers and mark its presence.

These appreciated efforts may also act as a shield and mitigate the damage to a brand caught up in an ethical brand scandal. Moreover, this study shall provide marketers with a pool of strategies in the case of an ethical brand scandal. Others may also adopt such sustainable initiatives to uplift the unprivileged and overcome its shortcomings of the past as a brand.

References


Marketing SMEs
The role of culture in family business governance

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**Keywords:**  
Family business, governance, culture, institutional theory

**Extended Abstract**  
This study investigates whether the governance arrangements of listed family firms vary across countries depending on differences in cultural values. Extant research maintains that the governance arrangements of listed family firms are strongly influenced by “the logic of the family”, i.e. by the socioemotional priorities and the institution of the family (Miller et al., 2017). Family business scholars have remarked that such logic of the family often leads listed family firms to adopt family-intensive governance arrangements (e.g., large family ownership, employment of family members in key corporate positions) that are considered as “unorthodox” in the eye of market actors and observers (Miller et al., 2018; Miller et al. 2013) who are more accustomed to a “logic of business” characterized by values and material practices based on efficiency, merit, competition, and reward for performance (Thornton et al., 2015). In turn, such family-intensive governance tends to trigger financial markets’ and public shareholders’ skepticism about listed family firms’ competency and trustworthiness.

In this paper we challenge this conventional assumption by proposing that family-intensive governance arrangements may not be ubiquitously seen as unorthodox by market observers but, depending on the cultural context, they may even be considered as valuable and value-adding. Our argument builds on the notion that logics are socially- and culturally-determined constructs that vary around the world (Greenwood et al. 2011; Thornton et al., 2015). As a result, we contend that what market participants and observers consider as orthodox governance arrangements will tend to vary across countries. Importantly, this also implies that the extent of the skepticism triggered by a strong involvement of the family in corporate decisions also varies from country to country. More specifically, we theorize that in long-term oriented societies stakeholders of the financial market may evaluate more positively the long-range temporal perspective of family governance because in such cultural contexts people embrace and more positively evaluate virtues oriented to future rewards (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010). We thus hypothesize that it will be more likely for listed family firms to adopt family-intensive governance arrangements in long-term oriented societies than in short-term oriented ones. To test our theory, we analyzed a global sample of 826 listed family firms. Our findings show that the long-term orientation of a society is positively associated to the likelihood that the family owns the largest portion of the firm’s equity and at the same time the CEO is a member of the family while it is negatively associated to the likelihood that the family owns a minority equity stake.

This study contributes to research on family firm internationalization (Debellis et al., 2021; Rondi et al., 2022) and on the governance arrangements of listed family firms (e.g. Miller et al., 2013; 2018) by arguing and showing that cultural values – in our case the long-term orientation of a society – affect the extent to which market stakeholders perceive a misalignment between family and business logics because their own culture inevitably shapes their judgement and their understanding of the elements that characterize proper business practices. Therefore, in so far as the values associated to family ownership and control are considered as important in a culture, an intense involvement of the family in the governance of listed firms should not trigger such strong negative stakeholders’ reactions as past research had assumed and theorized.

**References**


Abstract:
The purpose of this paper is to investigate the impact of multiple strategic orientations (i.e., entrepreneurial orientation (EO), market orientation (MO) and branding orientation (BO)) on business performance (BP) among B2B SMEs in Greece. In particular, the goal is to use the Resource Based View (RBV) theory, to understand the extent to which strategic orientations are associated to BP directly or through vital marketing capabilities (MC) such as innovation capabilities (IC) and branding capabilities (BC). The proposed conceptual model is tested using PLS-SEM using a sample of 182 B2B SMEs operating in the pharma/cosmetic/chemical products sector in Greece. The results of the PLS-SEM model indicates that all strategic orientations (SO) improve business performance albeit in a different way. More specifically, EO improves BP either directly or through both marketing capabilities, BO requires both marketing capabilities to improve BP and, finally, MO only indirectly, through BC, improves BP. This study provides new insights by identifying the routes through which strategic orientations improves business performance.

Keywords: Business performance, B2B Strategic Marketing, Strategic orientations, Marketing capabilities

Introduction
A strategic orientation demonstrates the way companies steer their managerial decisions and organizational activities to improve their performance (e.g., Anees-ur-Rehaman and Johnston, 2019). Most previous studies indicate three strategic orientations are mostly adopted by business companies. More specifically, MO, which are aiming to satisfy and retain valuable customers (Urde et al., 2013), EO, which are aiming to promote the culture of autonomy, innovativeness, risk-seeking and pro-activeness within the company (George and Marino, 2011) and BO, which are aiming to support the development of a stronger brand (George and Marino, 2011). Each strategic orientation has specific strategic choice which supports the improvement of relevant aspects of business performance (Anees-ur-Rehaman and Johnston, 2019). Although there are many studies arguing that the adoption of these three strategic orientations is of paramount importance for B2B SMEs to improve their BP (e.g., Laukkanen et al., 2013; Masadeh et al., 2018), other research efforts have shown that these orientations has only potential value (Murray et al., 2011; Kajalo and Lindblom, 2015). More specifically, researchers following the RBV theory suggest that the adoption of these three strategic orientations are not sufficient for the companies to deliver better results (e.g., Ngo and O’Cass, 2012; Kajalo and Lindblom, 2015). Morgan et al. (2009). Baker and Sinkula (2009) and Keh et al., (2007), for example, suggest that market-based knowledge assets such as these three strategic orientations (i.e., intangible company resources) interact with marketing capabilities to better explain business performance. Based on above it would be very interesting to understand the routes through which strategic orientations improves B2B SMEs performance. As such the objective of the current study is to propose and empirically validate a conceptual model representing the direct and indirect, through MC, effects of three strategic orientation on business performance.

Theoretical Framework and Research Hypotheses
BP measurement is very important for companies aiming to translate their strategy into desired behaviors and results (Silvestro, 2014). Although, objective measures of business performance are preferable there are various obstacles (non-availability, obscure/manipulated data etc.) in getting actual objective data. Thus, for a more reliable SMEs performance measurement, the focus should be on using subjective measures related to companies’ sales, profit, and economic growth (Sayal and Banerjee, 2022).
Previous studies argue that companies adopting a MO strategy strive to better understand their customers to create superior value for them, understand their current and potential competitors’ strengths, weaknesses and capabilities and finally efficiently coordinate their company-wide resources for the creation of superior value for customers (Narver and Slater, 1990). These companies, either small or large, are expected to produce better value for customers and, subsequently, attain competitive advantage and thus better performance than their competitors (e.g., Kajalo and Linblome, 2015; Laukkanen et al., 2016; Sayal and Banerjee, 2022). Based on the above, we hypothesize that:

\[ H1: \text{MO is positively related to BP} \]

EO reflects the styles, ways and practices of SMEs decision making (Wiklund and Shepherded, 2005). Firms adopting EO are characterized as autonomous, aggressive toward competition, proactive, innovative and risk seekers (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Kajalo and Lindblom, 2015). Proactiveness refers to the companies’ inclination to discover and exploit new business opportunities before its competitors; Risk-seeking refers to the companies’ intentions to enter in high-risk business practices. Innovativeness defines the companies’ willingness to encourage and nurture new ideas in their business practices; Autonomy refers to allowing employees to think independently during the idea generation and implementation process; and Competitive aggressiveness is the companies’ propensity to challenge its competitors to gain competitive advantage (Sayal and Banerjee, 2022). Several recent studies indicate that EO is positively and significantly related to the organizational performance of SMEs (e.g., Kajalo and Lindblom, 2015; Sayal and Banerjee, 2022). Based on the above, we hypothesize that:

\[ H2: \text{EO is positively related to BP} \]

BO is a type of organizational culture in which companies pace strategic focus on brand (Urde et al., 2013). This strategy considers the brand as a valuable strategic asset of the company rather than a marketing tool. According to Urde (1999, p. 117) BO is “an approach in which the process of the organization revolves around the creation, development and protection brand identity in an ongoing interaction with target customers with the aim of achieving lasting competitive advantages in the form of brands”. A BO approach transforms organizational values into core brand values and identity which in turns become the point of reference for strategic management (Hirvonen and Laukkainen, 2014). According to Urde (1994) companies that place the brand at the heart of their strategy, they perform better in situations of high market volatility, and generate more profits. Furthermore, Reijonen et al. (2012) shown that growing SMEs are more BO than declining/stable SMEs. Based on the above, we hypothesize that:

\[ H3: \text{BO is positively related to BP} \]

The RBV theory of the firms argues that BP depends on resources endowments (Hooley and Greenley, 2005). Other research efforts suggest capabilities rather than resources as the main drivers of BP (Newbert, 2007). Lack of consistent empirical results explaining the SO–BP relationship compelled researchers to look for mediators (Noble et al., 2002). In this study we assume that SO enable firms to develop MC which, in turn, simultaneously enhance the SOs role in driving firms’ growth. According to Kajalo and Linblome (2015), MC are defined as “the integrative processes designed to apply the collective knowledge, skills, and resources of a firm to the market-related needs of the business, enabling the business to add value to its goods and services, adapt to market conditions, take advantage of market opportunities and meet competitive threats” (p. 582). MC can be seen as the marketing process that support marketing strategy. Based on the B2B and SME literature that examine the impact of MC on BP, Merrilees et al. (2011) identifies two higher-level MC to prevail, namely innovation and branding. Empirical evaluation on how MC contribute to BP are relatively scant. For example, Ngo and O’Cass (2012) shows that marketing resources, such as SOs, and MC are complementary, and that complementarity enhance company’s performance. Kajalo and Lindblom (2015) shows that MCs in small retailing firms are positively related to BP. Odoom et al. (2017) empirically validated the relationship between BC and BP and and Aloulou (2019) provided empirical evidence concerning the impact of NPD success on financial performance. Based on the above, we hypothesize that:

\[ H4a: \text{IC is positively related to BP} \]

\[ H4b: \text{BC is positively related to BP} \]

Innovativeness may also help companies to realize the significance of branding, not only for new products’ successful launching, but as a tool to adapt new products according to customer needs (Ferreira and Coelho, 2020). Several researchers demonstrate that innovation has a significant effect on BC and its assets (e.g., brand loyalty/ awareness/leadership/image) (Hanaysha and Hilman, 2015) as it may lead to brand equity (Shriram et al., 2007) and they may both interact with one another to affect sales (Sharma et al., 2016). Thus, we hypothesize that:

\[ H5: \text{IC is positively related to BC} \]

Several previous studies empirically validate the relationship between MO and MC towards improving BP. As such increased MO levels is likely to lead to increased levels of innovativeness (HOoley et al., 2005; Merrilees et al., 2011; Frishammar and Åke Hörte, 2007), better customer-linking capabilities and greater emphasis on
brand building (Sarkar and Mishra, 2017), which both, in turn, will improve BP. Based on the above, we hypothesized that:

**H6a:** IC mediates the relationship between MO and BP

**H6b:** BC mediates the relationship between MO and BP

Previous research efforts concerning EO suggest that its significant positive impact on SMEs performance is further enhanced by MC (e.g., Kajalo and Lindblom, 2015; Martin and Javalgi, 2016). Bhuian et al. (2005) suggest that entrepreneurship provides a filter through which organizations view and direct market intelligence processes. That is, entrepreneurship influences the marketing processes being carried out in the firm. Chen et al. (2012) shows that EO simultaneously enhance companies’ exploitative and explanatory capabilities and Rincon et al. (2022) found that MC act as full mediator in the EO-BP link. Aloulou (2018), found a significant impact between EO and firms’ innovations performance, and finally, Sok et al. (2017), in line with the RBV theory, proposed and theoretically validated that BP is better explain if the role of MC, in enhancing the direct impact of EO on BP, is considered. Based on the above, we hypothesized that:

**H7a:** IC mediates the relationship between EO and BP

**H7b:** BC mediates the relationship between EO and BP

Finally, BO represents a core philosophy that directs strategic emphasis towards the brand and subsequent brand building and management actions (Urde et al., 2013; Hirvonen and Laukkanen, 2014). To realize the performance benefits of BO and build brands with high levels of brand equity, a proxy of BP, firms must manifest their BO via BC. BC enables the firms to create and position in the minds of target customers the important aspects of the brand, such as desired brand associations, positive brand image and favorable brand positioning (Orr et al., 2011). By driving the customers’ knowledge of the brand and creating expectations about its performance along the dimensions relevant to them, BC plays an important role in creating perceived customer value, facilitating relationship building and subsequent brand attachment (Morgan et al., 2009; Vorhies et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2020). On the other hand, according to Tellis et al. (2009), innovation enables firms to generate differentiated processes and brands, with the ultimate intention of gaining competitive edge. In addition, Vaux Halliday and Trott (2010) suggest that firms may be able to improve their brand competence by emphasizing mechanisms of technology innovation or design innovation management. Indeed, the literature contends that brand-oriented companies are highly relied on innovation to help them to build robust brand images and reputation assets and protect their brands from imitation by competition and to respond quickly and more efficiently to changes in the marketplace (Odoom and Mensah, 2019). Based on the above, we hypothesized that:

**H8a:** IC mediates the relationship between BO and BP

**H8b:** BC mediates the relationship between BO and BP

### Research Methodology

In order to test the above-postulated relationships, an online survey was conducted during March - April 2021 amongst 182 SMEs belonging to the chemical, pharma and cosmetics products sector in Greece. To ascertain validity, all scales were adapted from past literature, slightly rephrased to fit the context. More specifically, the scales measuring EO, MO, BO and BP were retrieved from Kajalo and Lindblom (2015), while those of IC and BC from Merrieles et al. (2011). This study also included two control variables. First, the age of company (measured in years) was included because the older firms are expected to be well-known in market and perform better. Second, size of the firm was measured from the number of employees. Typically, larger firms have relatively bigger operations and abundant resources. Based on the proposed conceptualization, the research hypotheses are tested with Partial Least Squares. PLS avoids the need for large samples and deals well with multicollinearity and skewed distributions (Hair et al., 2011).

### Analysis and Results

CFA was carried out to assess the validity of all of the construct measures included in this study. In order to evaluate the reliability of the latent variables, composite reliability values for each latent variable were calculated (e.g., Hair et al., 2011). They all exceeded the recommended level of 0.70 (ranging from 0.888 to 0.938). In addition, all factor loadings were statistically significant at the 5 per cent level, and all of the factor loadings exceeded the 0.7 level (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). To conclude, all measures demonstrate adequate convergent validity. Discriminant validity was assessed for each construct following the methods suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). We found that the square root of the average variance extracted is greater than all of the corresponding correlations, which indicates adequate discriminant validity. After establishing an acceptable measurement model, we proceeded to estimate the structural model. As shown in Fig. 1, except EO ($\beta = 0.14; p < 0.01$), the other two strategic orientations (i.e., MO and BO) do not directly affect BR. As such $H2$ is supported while $H1$ and $H3$ were not. On the other hand, both MC aspects directly affect BP, where the impact of BC ($\beta = 0.34; p < 0.01$) is greater than that of IC ($\beta = 0.18; p < 0.01$). At the same time, BC also partially mediates the relationship between IC and BP, as IC ($\beta = 0.35; p < 0.01$) positively affect BC and the indirect
effect of IC on BP, through BC, is significant ($\beta = 0.12; p < 0.01$). These results provide support to hypotheses $H4$ and $H5$.

Finally, both IC and BC are significantly affected by EO ($\beta = 0.14; p < 0.01; \beta = 0.09; p < 0.01$) and BO ($\beta = 0.40; p < 0.01; \beta = 0.46; p < 0.01$) respectively, while only BC is affected by MO ($\beta = 0.16; p < 0.01$). The consideration of the indirect effects of SOs on BP indicates that both IC and BC mediate the relationship between EO ($\beta = 0.056; p < 0.01$), BO ($\beta = 0.227; p < 0.01$) and BP, while only BC mediates the relationship between MO ($\beta = 0.066; p < 0.01$) and BP. Consequently, $H6b$, $H7$, and $H8$ are supported while $H6a$ is not.

The goodness-of-fit (GoF), representing an index bounded between 0 and 1, are used for PLS model global validation. The relevant value for the proposed model is 0.59, indicating that the findings adequately validate the PLS model globally (Hair et al., 2011). The proposed model also demonstrates a high level of predictive power ($R^2$) because the model’s constructs explain 23% of variance in IC, 69% of variance in BC and 38% of variance in BP. Finally, the blindfolding results of $Q^2$ for all endogenous constructs are greater than 0.25 for all endogenous variables, confirming the model’s high predictive relevance as $Q^2$ value for all model’s endogenous variables are greater than zero (Hair et al., 2011).

Conclusions and implications

The aim of this paper was to provide new insights into the impact of three SOs on BP in the context of B2B SMEs operating in the sectors of chemical, pharma, and cosmetics products. The study contributes to the literature by demonstrating the routes through which EO, MO and BO impact on BP. The results of the PLS-SEM analysis indicated that all strategic orientations improve BP, albeit in a different way. More specifically, EO improves BP either directly or through innovation and branding capabilities, BO appears to require both innovation and branding capabilities to improve BP and, finally, MO requires BC to improve BP. To sum up, all SOs can act as the basis for improved BP, however their performance impact is not straightforward, and it has to be studied within broader models (Kajalo and Lindblom, 2015). The study also provides important managerial implications. First of all, B2B SMEs should recognize that all SOs are worthwhile management goals or business cultures to adopt. The results clearly show that all SOs can be beneficial (directly or indirectly) to BP in the context under investigation. Second, B2B SMEs should not only focus their efforts on adopting MO, EO, and BO as business cultures, but also to devote considerable attention to the underlying internal processes and MC in order to realize the potential value of the former ones. In other words, in order to provide value to their customers and differentiate themselves from their competitors, B2B SMEs have to invest in NPD and brand development and management capabilities (Morgan et al., 2009; Kajalo and Lindblom, 2015).

There is a series of limitations that suggest caution to the findings and can be used as directions for further research. First, although the subjective and objective measures of performance are highly correlated, the lack of objective financial performance data limits our analysis (Keh et al., 2007). Second, the sample of the study are Greek B2B SMEs, and it may explain the nature of the findings. Therefore, it is very important to conduct comparative studies in other business sectors and national settings in which the business environment and culture are different from that of Greece.

References


Development and financing programs for Small and Medium Enterprises during the COVID 19 period in the Region of Western Macedonia

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Abstract
The measures taken in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic control created the need to support small and medium-sized Greek enterprises, for which financial and development schemes were implemented aiming at coping with the consequences of COVID-19. Financial aid programs depended on the public implementing body, such as the Hellenic Development Bank, the Loan Guarantee Fund, the European Investment bank, and the Western Macedonia Development Fund to small and medium-sized enterprises.

The present paper discusses the loans granted by the Hellenic Development Bank until 30/09/2021. To investigate funding effectiveness, a field survey was organized with enterprises operating in the Region of Western Macedonia. The research was carried out via a questionnaire answered with personal interviews. A total of 228 answered questionnaires were collected from various enterprises in the four counties of the region.

Data analysis demonstrated that all enterprises were affected by the specific measures to a different degree, depending on type of business activity. According to the results, liabilities increased, whereas liquidity and revenues declined. In addition, 10% of the researched enterprises were forced to shut down during the lockdown.

To address liquidity problems caused by the pandemic measures, 47.16% of the surveyed enterprises applied for a loan, 15.60% applied to creditors, whereas 20.21% had no liquidity problems.

Financial aid to enterprises derived from various schemes, such as the “Working capital financing scheme” (15.44%), “The COVID-19 Loan Guarantee Fund” (2.78%), the newly established “Western Macedonia Development Fund” (29.62%), and the “repayable advance scheme” (41.27%).

The Western Macedonia Development Fund is a significant financing tool for the enterprises of Western Macedonia, as, according to the surveyed enterprises (87.22%), access to funds was easier.

Data analysis demonstrated that 42.31% of the participating enterprises had not applied for a loan for various reasons, and 37.50% did not meet loan requirements.

As regards business survival, a number of enterprises stated that they had recovered significantly (20.18%), whereas others (32.46%) claimed that they had recovered to pre-Covid levels.

Finally, the research demonstrated that, overall, financial aid was not sufficient for business survival. In addition, the participants suggested various measures, such as tax relief, and business debt restructuring.

Keywords: financing programs, Small and Medium Enterprises, COVID 19, Region of Western Macedonia

1. Introduction
The COVID-19 Pandemic and the urgent measures taken to reduce spread, rapidly affecting all economic sectors, qualified as an 'exceptional occurrence' for all countries worldwide, including Greece. The pandemic impact on the Greek economy was severe, as the Greek economy and businesses had only then started recovering from the harsh measures applied in the context of the debt crisis and the relevant memoranda. At that period, the fiscal analysis of Greek finance statistics was positive, solvency and confidence ratios were improved, and the economy had regained access to international financial and bond markets.

However, the outbreak of the pandemic at the end of the first quarter of 2020 unexpectedly interrupted the upward trend of economic activities at the beginning of the year. Pressure increased dramatically in the second quarter of 2020, as shown by data demonstrating staggering recession in the specific quarter (-15.2% of GDP on
an annual basis), and a sharp decline in domestic demand and the Nominal Private Sector Final Consumption Expenditure (both consumer and investment), as well as shrinking exports in the context of increased uncertainty and forced restrictive measures (NATIONAL BANK OF GREECE). Businesses, which had not yet recovered from the debt crisis and memoranda, had to confront a health crisis and harsh restrictive measures, which had an adverse effect on their status. Governments immediately imposed various measures to fight the pandemic impact, such as lockdowns, teleworking, use of masks, school closures, and business financial aid schemes. Forced business closure led enterprises to a deadlock, created many financial problems and threatened business survival. To overcome ‘exceptional occurrence’ conditions and achieve recovery, the Hellenic Development Bank, the Covid 19 Loan Guarantee Fund, and the Western Macedonia Development Fund (WMDF) adopted a set of co-financed and subsidized development and financing programs. State financial aid was also provided in the form of a repayable advance and exceptional State aid. The Greek economy was supported by the European Commission, which, since the pandemic outbreak, had adopted support measures under the State aid Temporary Framework and EU State Aid rules, aiming to help citizens and businesses alleviate the significant economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic (European Commission, 2021).

2. Improving the liquidity position of small and medium-sized enterprises due to the pandemic

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) affected by the pandemic and the frequent lockdowns had to be immediately supported to be able to survive.

The set of measures implemented by the government to support affected enterprises with low turnover rates included:

- Repayable advance
- Suspension of loan installment payment
- Suspension of liabilities payment to State and Insurance Organizations
- Rent relief
- Public guarantees on bank loans, with interest rate subsidy. Loan guarantees were provided through the Hellenic Development Bank (EBA) (Hellenic Voice, 2020).

In the context of business state aid, financial support schemes were designed by various stakeholders funded by financial institutions.

According to data from the Bank of Greece, the amounts granted directly by banks to small and medium-sized enterprises (i.e., grants from other financial organizations) account for approximately 9.9 billion euros and 3.8 billion euros in 2020 and for an eight-month period in 2021, respectively. EBA schemes contributed about € 6.5 billion in 2020 and € 1.3 billion in Jan.-Aug. 2021. From the beginning of the year until the end of September, 3,000 loans of 738 million euros were granted through the COVID-19 Loan Guarantee Fund. WMDF granted 443 loans of 14 million euros (for small and medium-sized enterprises in Florina, Kozani, Kastoria and Grevena) and the Business Finance Entrepreneurship Fund II (TEPIX II) enabled disbursement of 1,000 loans of 87 million euros.

EBA's total grants from the COVID-19 Loan Guarantee scheme account for € 16,000 of the total amount of € 6 billion since the pandemic outbreak. By adding loans from WMDF and Business Finance Entrepreneurship Fund II (TEPIX II), the aggregate lending amount comes to 8.2 billion euros for 35,600 loans (Stergiou, 2021). In detail, the relevant financing and funding organizations/bodies include:

- **The Hellenic Development Bank (HDB)**: funds all Greek enterprises, mainly small and medium-sized ones. HDB funding has provided significant benefits for businesses, such as low interest rates and unsecured loans, which made HDB a reference point for SME entrepreneurship development (Hellenic Development Bank, 2019).

To address the needs of affected companies, EBA introduced the "COVID-19 Loan Guarantee Fund", aiming to support enterprises to have access to capped portfolio guaranteed loans (Hellenic Development Bank, 2020). In addition, loans were granted to affected enterprises via the "Business Financing" action of Business Finance Entrepreneurship Fund II (TEPIX II). With the onset of the pandemic, Greek Banks, in cooperation with the Hellenic Development Bank, began to grant loans to small and medium-sized enterprises to confront the pandemic adverse effects.

- **Two-year interest rate subsidy working capitals due to the COVID-19 pandemic**

According to the Hellenic Development Bank, the "Subprogram 3" Provision of Working Capital with a two-year interest rate subsidy of the Business Finance Entrepreneurship Fund II (TEPIX II) on 30/09/2021 enabled granting 10,185 loans to small and medium-sized enterprises, and disbursement of 1,300,112,889 euros.

- **Subprogram 4 - Working Capital with interest rate subsidy**
As reported by the Hellenic Development Bank, the "Subprogram 4" Provision of Working Capital with interest rate subsidy of the Business Finance Entrepreneurship Fund II (TEPIX II) on 30/09/2021 enabled granting 7,118 loans to small and medium-sized enterprises, and disbursement of 429,373,138 euros.

- **COVID-19 Loan Guarantee Fund**
  The Fund is managed by EBA. A financial contribution of one billion (1,000,000,000) Euros is expected for the Guarantee Fund via the Public Investment Program to EBA. The specific Fund resources are co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Greek State, and derive from the Operational Program Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and Innovation (EPAnEK), 2014-2020 (Hellenic Development Bank, 2020). The Loan Guarantee Fund is a three-cyclescheme (PIRAEUS BANK, 2021). According to the Hellenic Development Bank, the COVID-19 Loan Guarantee Fund, dated 30/09/2021, enabled granting 14,900 loans to small and medium-sized enterprises and disbursement of 3,485,710,144 euros.

- **European Investment Fund and SME Financing**
  The activation of the new Investment Guarantee Fund for the provision of loan guarantee investment loans to small and medium-sized enterprises aimed at business recovery from the problems caused by the pandemic. The new Fund is managed by the European Investment Fund (EIF), which guarantees investment loans up to 80%. EIF is part of the European Investment Bank Group and partly owned by the European Commission (European Commission, 2021).

- **COSME COVID 19**
  The "COSMECOVID 19" guarantee scheme aims to cover liquidity gaps of small and medium-sized enterprises affected by the pandemic, and enables SMEs to meet emergency, regular or temporary liquidity needs. This scheme facilitates access of small and medium-sized enterprises with sustainable business activities in the Greek territory of financial institutions, which strengthen investment activity in Greece.

- **Contribution of the European Investment Bank**
  The European Investment Bank is the European Union financial institution which contributes, in collaboration with local financial institutions, to financing investment programs, in compliance with the objectives of the European Union. For as long as loans meet all eligibility criteria for EIB financing, the Bank will provide beneficiaries with relevant interest rate benefits. Interest rates are reduced by at least 0.25% (or 25 basis points) of the annual interest rate for National Bank relative loans granted without the contribution of the European Investment Bank.

- **Interest Rate Subsidy for Current Loans (A and B cycle)**
  The Action involves support-enterprises affected by the pandemic, by covering business loan interest fees for a 3-month period. The Action is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) of the European Union and by national resources.

- **Development Fund of Western Macedonia - Small & very small-sized enterprises**
  To address the emergency conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the local economy of Western Macedonia, a funding scheme was introduced, co-financed by the Hellenic Development Bank (HDB) and the Region of Western Macedonia, namely, the "Co-financed Loan Fund", and more specifically, the Action"WMDF-COVID 19 - Small & Very Small-sized Enterprises: Interest Rate Subsidy Working Capital Loans" (WMDF - COVID 19) (Hellenic Development Bank, 2021). The Development Fund of Western Macedonia is the first Regional financial instrument funded by the Greek State and the Region of Western Macedonia. The Development Fund of Western Macedonia (WMDF) grants Working Capital loans to cover liquidity needs of affected Small and Very Small-sized Enterprises in the Region of Western Macedonia, to enable them to meet operational needs (e.g., suppliers, operating expenses, etc.) (Taxheaven, 2021). According to the Hellenic Development Bank, the Development Fund of Western Macedonia - TADYM on 30/09/2021, enabled granting 443 loans to small and medium-sized enterprises in Western Macedonia and disbursement of 13,609,449 euros. A dominant role in the action of the Development Fund of Western Macedonia (TADYM - COVID 19) is that of Piraeus Bank, which, according to an article published in the online newspaper neaflorina on 31/08/2021, has already approved more than 200 loans and disbursed more than 5.5 million euros to 158 enterprises (Neaflorina, 2021).

3. **Empirical research**
To investigate state financial aid effectiveness, a field survey was organized with enterprises operating in the Region of Western Macedonia. The research was carried out via a questionnaire answered with personal interviews. A total of 228 answered questionnaires were collected from various enterprises in the four counties of the region.

Data analysis demonstrated that the participating enterprises include a wide range of business sectors and activities, such as: "Manufacturing" (3.95%), "Construction" (3.07%), "Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles" (31.58%), "Transport and Storage" (4.39%), "Accommodation and catering activities" (5.70%), "Financial and insurance activities" (0.88%), "Professional, scientific and technical
activities” (0.44%), “Education” (7.89%), “Healthcare activities” (10.96%), “Arts, entertainment and recreational activities” (1.75%) and “Other services” (29.39%).

Most enterprises operate for more than 11 years (74.12%), 5 enterprises for 5-10 years (17.54%), and 19 for 1-5 years (8.33%).

80.70% of the surveyed subjects stated that they employ 1-9 people, 23 enterprises 10-49 people (10.09%), 21 enterprises had no employees (9.21%), whereas no participating enterprises employ 50-249 employees.

Most of the surveyed enterprises (72.81%) did not suspend business at all, 25% completely suspended business only during the lockdown period, and 2.19% of them stated that they remained inactive after the lockdown periods. In addition, 50.88% claimed they were affected by the pandemic measures “significantly”, 44 were “very” affected (19.30%), 61 were “rather” affected and only 3.7% were not affected at all. The table below shows the most common impacts on enterprises.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shutdown</td>
<td>10.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff reduction</td>
<td>3.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss from financial liabilities</td>
<td>27.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquidity problems</td>
<td>26.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue decline</td>
<td>31.88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most enterprises in Western Macedonia stated that during the last two years their revenues declined (71.49%), 56 answered that they declined slightly (24.56%), 2.63% they remained stable and only for 1.32% of the subjects’ revenues increased slightly.

To address liquidity problems caused by the pandemic measures, 47.16% of the surveyed enterprises applied for a loan, 15.60% applied to creditors, 16.67% reduced their operating costs (staff / salary reduction) and only 20.21% did not have liquidity problems.

In addition, more than half of the enterprises (58.33%) applied for a loan to meet current liabilities and 41.67% did not apply for a loan.

During interviews, the participants were asked why they had not applied for a bank loan, to be able to meet urgent and unexpected liquidity problems. 37.50% of them answered because they believed that they did not meet requirements, 11.54% because they were not sure that their application would be approved, 9 because they could not meet future liabilities (8.65%) and 44 that they did not need borrowed capital (42.31%).

As regards the financial aid to enterprises during the COVID-19 pandemic, 15.44% of the subjects were granted working capitals at low interest rate, 11 (2.78%) were funded via the COVID-19 Loan Guarantee Fund, 29.62% via the Western Macedonia Development Fund, 163 enterprises were granted a repayable advance (41.27%), and 43 were granted loans via the scheme “Region aid funds to enterprises affected by COVID-19” (10.89%).

The table below demonstrates financing sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working capital at low interest rate</td>
<td>15.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Macedonia Development Fund</td>
<td>29.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repayable advance</td>
<td>41.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region aid funds to enterprises affected by COVID-19</td>
<td>10.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19 Loan Guarantee Fund</td>
<td>2.78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The subjects’ views about accessibility to financial aid schemes highlighted the fact that the Western Macedonia Development Fund is the most easily accessible scheme (87.22%), followed by working capitals at low interest rate (10.52%) and the COVID-19 Loan Guarantee Fund (2.26%).

As regards the question “What do you think about the role of the Western Macedonia Development Fund”, 187 companies answered that it is very important for the enterprises of Western Macedonia (82.02%), 3 companies that it is rather important (1.32%), 29 that its role is indifferent (12.72%) and 9 answered that its role is minor in terms of development (3.95%).

Finally, an attempt was made to collect data about current business status after state aid funds and lifting the restrictive measures for the pandemic. The analysis demonstrated that 44 companies operate without borrowed capitals (19.30%), 74 companies answered that business status remains stable (32.46%), 64 answered that they recovered slightly (28.07%) and 64 significantly (20.18%).
4. Summary-conclusions
The measures taken in Greece in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic control created the need for financial state aid to small and medium-sized Greek enterprises. Financial and development programs were implemented for small and medium-sized enterprises to confront the consequences of COVID-19. The financial aid provided by the programs depended on the public implementing body, such as the Hellenic Development Bank, the Loan Guarantee Fund, the European Investment Bank, and the Western Macedonia Development Fund to small and medium-sized enterprises.

In the context of financial support, the relevant funding schemes designed by the government and the European Union were provided by various financial institutions. Small and medium-sized enterprises received loans directly from banks (i.e., without partner financial intermediaries), accounting for about 9.9 billion euros and 3.8 billion euros in 2020 and in an eight-month period in 2021, respectively.

EBA schemes contributed about €7.8 billion. From the beginning of the year until the end of September, the COVID-19 loan guarantee scheme granted 3,000 loans of 738 million euros. The Western Macedonia Development Fund granted 443 loans of 14 million euros (for small and medium-sized enterprises in Florina, Kozani, Kastoria and Grevena) and Business Finance Entrepreneurship Fund II (TEPIX II) enabled disbursement of 1,000 loans of 87 million euros.

In the Region of Western Macedonia, the empirical research demonstrated that the enterprises used the financial aid schemes to survive after the ‘exceptional occurrence’ measures of the two-year period of COVID-19, but they believed that financial support was not sufficient. Several enterprises in Western Macedonia could not apply for a financial aid program as they did not meet requirements, and they, thus, claim that the loan granting criteria should be reconsidered.

Several enterprises in Western Macedonia could not apply for a financial aid program as they did not meet requirements, and they, thus, claim that the loan granting criteria should be reconsidered. The participants suggested an additional package of state aid measures aiming at business recovery, which include tax relief, employment support schemes, social security coverage by the state, business loans at preferential rates, business debt restructuring for credit risk-free enterprises with liability problems during the pandemic, and ability to settle debts to the Unified Social Security Fund and the Revenue service on favorable terms.

There are also serious problems with available working capital for business survival, as small and medium-sized enterprises have not overcome the problems caused by the pandemic and hold that, to recover and avoid overindebtedness, it is required that new funding programs be adopted.

Finally, it appears that, despite the benefits from the relevant financing programs, the surveyed enterprises are still vulnerable and have not yet completely recovered.

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Abstract:

During the past few years, there has been an increased attention to diversity and inclusion initiatives from both academics and practitioners. For example, following the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement, large established firms, such as Google, started to introduce initiatives to partner with ethnic minority businesses (EMBs). These practices suggest that ethnic diverse alliance will bring benefits to both focal firms. The concept of brand alliance has been highlighted in the field of marketing as a beneficial strategy that enables participant firms to create competitive advantages in the marketplace (e.g., Baumgarth, 2004; Washburn et al., 2004; Ahn et al., 2009; Gammoh et al., 2010; Bouten et al., 2011; Fang et al., 2013). In the alliance between firms, the Signalling Theory (Spence, 1973) has been widely applied to suggest that the least known brands will benefit from the quality cues transferred through the reputation of the known brand (Voss and Gammoh, 2004). Hence, marketing strategies that feature more than both participants firms are still of great research interest (Bloom et al. 2006; Nguyen et al., 2019).

Previous research suggest that diverse businesses elicit positive consumers’ evaluations improving firms’ performance (e.g., Henderson and Rank-Christman, 2016). In the marketing field, this is demonstrated through the implicit association test (IAT) that empirically measures and establishes the impact of ‘the strength of the associations between concepts’ (e.g., black and white firms) on the consumer evaluations (e.g., less/ more favourable) (e.g., Brunel et al., 2004; Haugtvedt et al., 2008; Forehand et al., 2011). For example, Bhattacharjee et al. (2014) and Henderson and Rank-Christman (2016) argue that consumers will not prefer to experience a non-diverse brand because they will feel that the purchase is limiting their social identity. However, previous studies started to emphasise ‘the companies’ need for a range of voices at the table’ (Lewnes, 2021, p. 65) and the ‘necessity of ethnic cues to be depicted in marketing communications...to effectively reach the diverse audiences... [to] ensure fair representation of ethnic consumers and trigger their positive feelings of being part of the society’ (Licandru and Cui, 2018, p. 330).

The current pandemic has affected businesses and specifically small firms in a negative way (Omar et al., 2020). One of a great important segment of small-sized firms, are those firms that are owned and managed by ethnic-minority individuals. Although the number of EMBs is significantly increasing worldwide, previous research discussed extensively the challenges faced by these types of firms (Edelman et al., 2010; Adkins and Samaras, 2013), such as the lack of access to finance and managerial competences which limit their survival and growth. Perhaps, the most critical aspect that affects EMBs’ success is racism which puts them in a disadvantaged social position. Hence, EMBs are at a higher risk of experiencing more negative effects than their counterparts. To this end, the survival of such firms is under tremendous threat, and therefore, new strategies are needed to be implemented in order to response to the negative effect from the current pandemic and increase EMBs performance and growth. Current studies have started to emerge to examine different survival strategies that can be implemented by small firms when faced by different types of crises. For instance, turnaround strategies (Wenzel et al., 2020) has been examined in the extant literature as strategies that small firms can adopt to deal with the current pandemic. Moreover, Patch-working or bricolage (Kibria, 1994; Baker and Nelson, 2005) were proposed as survival strategies that ‘migrant entrepreneurs use to mitigate’ difficult conditions (Villares-Varela et al., 2018, p. 943). However, with the recent examples from the industry, we argue that strategic alliance is a powerful tool which can help EMBs in the post pandemic situation.

Although previous research has acknowledged the benefits of strategic alliances between companies, studies that examine the benefit and the effect of diverse strategic alliances are scant. In addressing this gap, we
draw on the Resource Based View theory (RBV) and the Signaling Theory and propose a conceptual framework where a strategic alliance between EMBs and non-EMBs will allow firms to navigate unprecedented times (e.g., Covid-19), increase their resilience and improve their performance. By using the widely adopted Simonin and Ruth’s (1998) model, we argue that the greater the fit between non-EMBs and EMBs, the more favourable consumers’ attitudes towards the alliance. Empirical evidence (e.g., Simonin and Ruth, 1998; Lee and Cavusgil, 2006) suggests that the fit between the participant brands is a determinant for a successful alliance. The importance and the impact of the fit between two firms can be viewed from the Congruity Theory (Osgood and Tannenbaum, 1955) which suggests that individuals form perceptions while evaluating the relationship between two entities (e.g., between non-EMBs and EMBs) and that consumers prefer harmony and consistency between cognitions. When consumers perceive the alliance between partners as a good match, it will result in an increase in ‘recall and an easier information of new association’ (Riley et al. 2015, p. 272). There exists ample of examples from the industry that can be considered as successful alliance between firms such as Dell computers and Intel processors and Whole Foods with Afrocenix. It has been suggested that these strategies create favourable consumers’ evaluation because of the perceived complementarity between the two partner brands (Simonin and ruth, 1998; Lee and Cavusgil, 2006). Hence, the higher the fit between the two firms, the more positive consumers’ attitudes towards this alliance, thereby increasing firms’ performance. Based on this line of argument, we suggest that positive consumer’s attitude towards the participant firms, prior to the alliance, will lead to more favourable attitudes towards the alliance.

In addition, previous research suggests that positive consumers’ attitude towards the participant brands will lead to a positive attitude towards the brands after the alliance (e.g., Simonin and Ruth, 1998; Schnitcka et al., 2017). This has been explained from the concept of spill-over effect which has been extensively examined in the strategic alliance literature (e.g., Simonin and Ruth, 1998; Voss and Gammoh 2004; Schnitcka et al., 2017). Spill-over effect has been found to affect the participant brands both positively (Simonin and Ruth, 1998; Voss and Gammoh, 2004; Washburn et al., 2004) and negatively (e.g., Till and Shimp, 1998; James, 2005; Votola and Unnava, 2006, Cornelis, 2010). However, it has been implied that the positive impact from the spill-over in the alliance is sometimes alleviated by undesirable brand events that causes a partner firm to receive a negative publicity (e.g., Till and Shimp, 1998; Votola and Unnava, 2006; Cornelis, 2010). As a result, the reputation of one firm in the alliance will be impacted in a negative way (e.g., Lego-Shell alliance). For example, Votola and Unnava (2006) suggest that the negative evaluations (prior to the alliance) of one of the partner brands will spill-over to the other participant brand. Further studies on negative spill-over effects in brand alliances suggest that alliances are sensitive to brand crises (Till and Shimp, Suh and Park, 2009). Hence, the more favourable the pre-attitudes of non-EMBs (and EMBs), the more favourable the attitudes towards the alliance.

Moreover, we propose that the familiarity of the participant firms will moderate the relationships between a) the fit and attitudes towards the alliance and; b) pre-attitudes and attitudes towards the alliance. Extant studies refer to the familiarity as to the degree to which a brand ‘has been heard, seen and experienced’ (Simonin and Ruth, 1998). Familiarity has been considered to play a moderating effect on the association between pre and post attitudes and it will affect the information that consumers integrate to their judgment while evaluating the alliance. The impact of familiarity in the evaluation of the alliance can be explained from the information asymmetry theory perspective. Information asymmetry involves two parties that have unequal amounts of information (Spence, 1973), such as the firm and the end user-customer. In these circumstances, one party (e.g., the customer) lacks the information that wishes to have, and the other party holds the information that wishes to share (e.g., the firm). In order to overcome information asymmetry, firms may use quality signals in their marketing campaigns to give indications to consumers regarding the quality of their products (Kirmani and Rao, 2000). In the context of the alliance, firms aim to extract positive customers’ reactions through customer’s assessment of information regarding the brand alliance (e.g., the fit). In order to facilitate the transmission of information, brand alliances often use established brands that customers are familiar with in order to provide them with quality cues such as the brand name (Simonin and Ruth, 1998). This implies that a company with a low familiarity may benefit by partnering with a company with a high familiarity because of the wider consumers’ reach. Hence, the greater the familiarity of the participant firms, the greater the relationship between the fit and attitudes towards the alliance; and the greater the familiarity of the participant firms, the greater the relationship between pre-attitudes and attitudes towards the alliance.

Finally, we use attitudes to predict the overall performance of the firm, and we suggest that attitudes towards the alliance and post attitudes towards the participant firms will affect the overall performance of each participant firms. The importance of examining attitudes towards the alliance lies in the predictive power of consumers’ attitudes to explain their buying behaviour and thereby affecting firm’s performance (Ajzen, 1991; Conner and Armitage, 1998). This can be approached from the Psychological Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985) which suggests that individuals’ consumption behaviour is derived from their attitude which is formed prior to the actual purchasing behaviour. And thereafter, cognitions and information will be formed, which will inform the purchasing behaviour. The more favourable the attitude is, the higher will be the possibility for a purchase to take place (Ajzen, 1991). Previous studies in the strategic alliance field used the
purchase action (i.e., sales) as a proxy to measure firms’ performance (e.g., Lusch and Brown, 1886; Luo, 2002). Our study has implications for both research by revealing unexplored benefits of diversity and inclusion in the strategic alliance and marketing field, by offering a strategic framework for practitioners to design collaborative strategies while engaging with external stakeholders.

**Keywords:** diverse alliances, non-ethnic minority firms, ethnic minority firms, consumers attitudes, performance

**References:**


Perceptions of consumers about CSR practices of SMEs: Insights from Greece and Kosovo

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Abstract: Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have not received reciprocal attention in academia, nor have they employed CSR programs to the same extent as larger organisations. Hence, this research investigates consumers’ views about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and CSR activities undertaken by SMEs in the fashion industry. It focuses on two countries from South-East Europe, namely Greece and Kosovo. It studies the phenomena in question by employing netnography, a qualitative approach. Two fashion-online communities from each country and two fashion YouTube videos were selected and analysed. This study shows that although they belong to the same region, there are differences in perceptions among Greek and Kosovar consumers. Yet, both of them are aware of the concept and its activities, and they serve as stakeholders pressure groups for SMEs in the region. Greek and Kosovar SMEs should be responsive to their consumers as consumers could significantly shift SMEs' visions and actions about CSR.

Key Words: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Consumer Perceptions, Qualitative Research

1. Introduction

Since the 1950s, the majority of studies in the CSR literature have shared a common focus – large companies (Sendhhofer, 2019). While the far-reaching impacts of large companies cannot be overlooked, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of the world economy (Jamali et al., 2017), and they are increasingly expected to implement CSR strategies and adhere to CSR policies (Hamann et al., 2017). SMEs impact consumers’ attitudes and behaviour by employing CSR strategies (Hamann et al., 2017). Until now, very few scholars have explicitly investigated the perceptions of consumers about CSR and its activities taken by SMEs. The existing knowledge of consumers’ perceptions of CSR strategies implemented by SMEs is entirely based on consumers’ perceptions of CSR activities taken by large firms (Chernev and Blair, 2015; Park and Ghauri, 2015) – this represents a very different context. Thus, future studies should enrich the literature on consumers’ perceptions of CSR applied by SMEs. This study intends to focus on the fashion sector as it is among the three most developed industries in SEE, and it is mostly composed of SMEs – 90% (Statista, 2019). The fashion industry has gained less attention from CSR researchers, yet it has increasingly prevailed in the SEE region in the last decade (Lu, 2019; Nutall, 2019).

This study intends to enhance the literature by exploring the Greek and Kosovar consumers’ perceptions of CSR practices undertaken by SMEs. The leading research question of this study is: (RQ) How do consumers in Greece and Kosovo perceive CSR activities implemented by SMEs? Specifically, this research aims to (1) understand the perceptions of Greek and Kosovar consumers regarding CSR activities applied by SMEs in the fashion industry and (2) investigate the impact of CSR activities employed by fashion SMEs on consumers buying intention. It contributes theoretically to the CSR in SMEs and consumer perceptions of CSR implemented by SMEs literature. From a practical standpoint, this study aims to provide valuable insight to those responsible for CSR in SMEs in the fashion industry in Greece and Kosovo about how to construct CSR activities successfully.
2. Literature Review

2.1 Corporate Social Responsibility in Small and Medium Enterprises

Scholars discuss that the temptation to focus exclusively on large businesses is rooted in the crucial role that such firms play in the global economy and their powerfulness and visibility (Spence, 2016; Sendlhofer, 2019). SMEs have not stood in the spotlight as much as large companies (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013), but SMEs are the backbone of the world economy (Jamali et al., 2017). European Commission defines them as having more than ten and fewer than 250 employees, a turnover of up to €50 m and a total balance sheet of less than €43m (EC, 2019). SMEs comprise more than 95% of private businesses worldwide and account for 90% or more of all businesses in an economy (Spence, 2016; Lythreatis et al., 2019). They are a significant factor in job creation and poverty reduction, as they provide approximately 60–70% of employment among both developed and developing countries (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013; Jamali et al., 2017). South-East Europe, for instance, generates more than three-quarters of employment from SMEs (OECD, 2016). Statistics might vary across countries or industries; nonetheless, since the turn of the millennium, the importance of SMEs in the global, regional and national economic growth and vitality has begun to be acknowledged by both scholars and practitioners (Tran and Jeppesen, 2016).

Besides all of these, there is, surprisingly, a scant amount of research on this ground (Jamali et al., 2017; Lythreatis et al., 2019). The limited research on this area is inconsistent with SMEs’ substantial impacts (Sendlhofer, 2019). Consequently, a large group of scholars has called for a shift in the focus of the CSR research agenda – from large companies to SMEs (Jamali et al., 2017; Lythreatis et al., 2019; Sendlhofer, 2019). The majority of researchers perceive SMEs as small versions of large firms. SMEs, however, differ from large firms (Lähdesmäki et al., 2019), and the CSR lessons that apply to large companies are not relevant to SMEs (Hamann et al., 2017). It is then crucial to study SMEs ‘in their own right’, apart from large companies; consequently, CSR theories and arguments applied to SMEs should not be adopted by large companies (as several studies have done so far) but account for SMEs’ particularities (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013).

2.2 Consumer Perceptions about Corporate Social Responsibility Practices of Small and Medium Enterprises

Very few scholars have explored the impact of CSR programs on consumers’ perceptions, and even fewer ones have explicitly focused on the influence of CSR and its activities, taken by SMEs, on consumers’ perceptions. Bui (2010) implicitly considered consumers’ perceptions of CSR practices in SMEs, but their major focus was on large firms. Rodrigues and Borges (2015) explored the relationship between consumers’ perceptions about CSR and consumers’ buying behaviour, but their focus was on one single SME, Salsa. Their study confirmed a positive relation between CSR perception and buying behaviour – consumers prefer to purchase from socially responsible brands but often doubt the nature of CSR activities. Rahman and Norman (2016), among others, found out that consumers prefer to purchase from smaller firms applying CSR activities rather than from large firms, whereas consumers’ attitudes remain the same regardless of firms’ size.

Although the aforesaid researchers have provided a grasp of this matter, the existing knowledge on consumers’ responses to CSR strategies implemented by SMEs is entirely based on consumers’ perceptions and behaviours of CSR activities taken by large firms (Chernev and Blair, 2015; Park and Ghauri, 2015). The aforementioned studies cannot thoroughly explain consumers’ perceptions, as some researchers have shown that SMEs are not small versions of large firms, and the arguments applied to large firms do not apply to SMEs (Hamann et al., 2017; Lähdesmäki et al., 2019). Therefore, this research intends to explore how consumers perceive CSR practices undertaken by SMEs (see RQ). It will also benefit practitioners, as understanding consumers’ responses towards CSR activities (both formal and informal) helps SME managers structure future CSR strategies.

Besides, countries like Greece and Kosovo have rarely grabbed the attention of scholars. Even though scholars like Chatzoudes et al. (2015) and Papadopoulos et al. (2012) have investigated the perceptions of consumers about CSR activities, the existing knowledge about the perceptions of consumers for CSR activities employed by SMEs is still insufficient. Greece and Kosovo, among others, present a different study context when compared to other countries (Wang et al., 2020).

3. Methodology

This research follows an interpretivist approach. This approach offers the opportunity to gather more comprehensive insights and understand new knowledge (Kapoulas and Mitic, 2012). This research is inductive, and its purpose is exploratory – it intends to understand and investigate the matter in question. The data was collected through netnographic research in Greece and Kosovo. Netnography has been used by researchers when
exploring consumers’ perceptions and behaviours (Xharavina et al., 2020), and it has offered a natural setting to explore consumer responses (Xun and Reynolds, 2010; Costello et al., 2017). It has also provided access to a variety of freely accessible information, and it has helped the researchers achieve a deep understanding of the perceptions and opinions of consumers about various phenomena. This research followed a passive stance (according to Quinton and Wilson’s (2016) suggestion). It focused only on publicly available data, and it preserved the privacy of members and participants by using pseudonyms such as P1, P2, P3 and M1, M2, and M3. Two fashion-related online communities (one per country) – namely, “GR-F” and “KS-F” – and two YouTube videos were selected and analysed for a three months period. The main focus of the netnographic research was text data. This research used the non-probability sampling method, and it used the purposive sampling type for the sample to fit the study’s objectives. The target population is consumers, who belong to generation Y (22-37 years old), and who buy clothes from SMEs from Greece and Kosovo in the fashion industry. The data was interpreted using thematic analysis, in particular, Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase framework.

4. Findings

Initially, findings present that consumers from Greece and Kosovo are familiar with the notion of CSR and its main activities (mainly the environmental and philanthropic ones). Their understanding varies from one participant to the other and does not necessarily comply with CSR definitions provided in academia. In their discussions, most members tend to mistake the concept of CSR with sustainability. This interchangeability of the terms also occurs in academia between scholars. Our paper, however, considers that it is incorrect to equate the two. Netnographic research shows a difference in views between Greek and Kosovar SME consumers about the applied CSR activities and their impact on consumers buying intentions. Greek consumers discuss strongly the non-ethical activities implemented by small and medium enterprises, especially Greek companies. They are, however, harsher critics when it comes to large companies as they consider that such size companies create greater consequences for various stakeholders, mainly consumers. Their discussions cover different aspects of the impacts that such companies have, but their main focus remains on the environmental aspect. They tend to discuss also the societal and economic impact of SMEs on them. Such discussions do not receive as much attention as the ones about the impact of SMEs on the environment. According to the netnographic research, Greek consumers support ethically driven companies. Several of them are loyal to companies that share similar views and beliefs. Participants appreciate each other’s opinions and recommendations about products and brands. On the other hand, Kosovar consumers do not discuss as enthusiastically as the Greek ones. Yet, their awareness of matters relevant to them creates thought-provoking group discussions. The environmental aspect of CSR takes up the main discussions, but they are not harsh critics of companies (regardless of size) that do not apply environment-related CSR actions. They tend to focus on their importance as consumers on matters relevant to them. Similar to Greek consumers, they use such platforms to recommend products or brands that belong to their preferences (CSR-wise), and they welcome each other’s suggestions.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study shows the perceptions of consumers about CSR and its practices undertaken by SMEs. Until now, a small number of studies have focused solely on SMEs (Hamann et al., 2017; Jamali et al., 2017). Thus, by exploring consumer perceptions on this topic, this paper contributes to CSR in SME literature (a developing field). Theoretically, it also contributes to the consumers’ perceptions ground as even fewer researchers have considered consumers’ perceptions of CSR activities undertaken by SMEs (Rodrigues and Borges, 2015; Rahman and Norman, 2016). This study covers two regions, which have been less investigated, Greece and Kosovo. Kosovo, in particular, has rarely grabbed the attention of scholars. By focusing on this country, this research also provides the literature on CSR in developing countries. It shows that Greek consumers are aware of the CSR concept and its activities contrary to previous research findings, which claim that Greece follows a slow pace in adopting the CSR mentality (although such studies have not focused explicitly on the awareness and perceptions of Greek consumers about the matter; Skouloudis et al., 2011; Papacharalampous et al., 2019). It indicates that Greek consumers are aware of the CSR notion and its environmental, social and economic activities, and they are supporters of SMEs that follow such actions. Consumers’ enthusiastic and constant discussions of the issue put them in the stakeholders’ pressure group. Thus, Greek SMEs should be responsive to Greek consumers as they (as stakeholders) could significantly shift SMEs’ visions and actions about CSR. These findings, however, do not suggest that Greek consumers consume from socially and environmentally aware SMEs. Future studies could investigate the attitude-behaviour gap and understand if Greek consumers’ views influence their consumption behaviour. Additionally, this research shows that Kosovar consumers are aware of the CSR concept and its activities. Although they are not as harsh critics as Greek consumers, they are also significant stakeholders to SMEs in their region. Future studies can compare and contrast the perceptions of
consumers about CSR activities in developed and developing countries, or they can investigate consumers’ perceptions face-to-face (or select any other approach). Lastly, future studies can also study other countries in the region, such as Albania or Croatia, and they can cover different industries (besides the fashion industry).

**References**


Marketing Strategy
Marketing during a global crisis: A study of sponsorship’s effectiveness during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract
The purpose of this research is to assess consumers' awareness of and attitudes toward sponsors, as well as to suggest a model for their purchasing intentions toward actual sponsors of a big sporting event during a period of crisis. The study used a quantitative approach, collecting and analyzing a total of 1,182 online responses from spectators of the EURO 2020 football tournament, which in turn were analyzed by SPSS and AMOS. According to the findings, characteristics such as sport involvement, sincerity, beliefs about sponsorship, and Covid-19 beliefs all had a significant influence on spectators’ awareness, attitudes, and purchase intentions.

Keywords: sponsorship, covid-19, beliefs, attitudes

Introduction:
For the sponsorship sector, these are turbulent times. In many parts of the world, sponsorship expenditures have decreased significantly in last two years. The trend is expected to deteriorate in the near future, with the international sports calendar being diminished in half and income in the sector anticipated to be down by $61bn (almost 50% of its predicted revenue) due to the COVID-19 pandemic (ESA, 2020). Even though nobody knows how long the outbreak will last or how severe its effects will be, there seems to be agreement that recovery will be tough and maybe more difficult than the recovery following the “Great Recession” of 2008. Although the industry has limitations in terms of what it can manage, there is an obvious need for marketers and agencies to adapt to a rapidly changing environment. The impact of the Covid-19 differs substantially depending on the sector (for example, food vs. sport), the means (for example, digital vs. on site consumption), and the primary market targeted (business to business vs. consumer).

Only a few researches have examined the impact of the COVID-19 on sports in general and sponsorship in specifically so far. In order to fill this - certainly temporary - absence in the field, this study will examine the most critical elements of COVID-19 for sport sponsorship from the standpoint of sport supporters. According to Foxall and Yani-de-Soriano’s (2005) points, COVID-19 generated the external environmental forces and the relating emotional responses which might affect attitude or prevention behavioral patterns with regard to potential sport consumption. As a result, it’s crucial to explore how external elements that are intimately linked to the stimulus (i.e., COVID-19) might affect sport supporters’ attitudes and behaviors toward sponsoring firms. This is a critical factor in providing sport managers with a framework or strategy for increasing the efficacy of sponsorship agreements in the context of a crisis. The findings of this research can help researchers better understand how sport consumers develop attitudes and behaviors toward sponsors when they don't have any options regarding the leisure activities due to unforeseen incidents.

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It is commonly established that watching sports events causes emotional experiences of excitement, which increase if the sport clubs participating are attractive to spectators (Olson, 2010). With the advent of large-screen TVs with high-definition analysis and even 3D viewing, the pleasure of attending sports at home is
becoming extremely similar to that of spectating them on-site (Rowe, 2014). As a result, transmitted sports content, especially live broadcasting of personally significant sporting events, might elicit increased levels of excitement and visual attention from spectators (Kim et al., 2017). There is significant proof in the sponsorship research that attention influences the establishment of consumer perceptions and reactions. According to studies, paying attention to sponsor signs during sports coverage influences significantly a variety of factors such as brand recognition, attitude formation, as well as purchasing decisions (e.g., Breuer & Rumpf, 2012; Rumpf & Breuer, 2018). As a result, spectators' awareness of and attitude toward sponsoring companies may be utilized as a reliable predictor of the impact of sponsorship.

Spectators' degree of sport involvement (Rumpf et al., 2020), the anticipated degree of sponsors' sincerity (Rumpf et al., 2020) and spectators' beliefs concerning sponsorship (Breuer & Rumpf, 2015) have all been recognized as key drivers of awareness and attitude formation in research on sponsorship effectiveness. Given that major sponsorship effectiveness antecedent factors, such as sponsorship awareness and attitude, are strongly associated with live sport spectatorship, which has been forbidden or dramatically decreased due to the shock that COVID-19 induced in individual's social lives and behavioral patterns, it is worthwhile to investigate the impact of Covid-related variables on sport sponsorship effectiveness.

In the sports-spectating context, an individual’s degree of involvement enriches spectator’s perceptions because of functionally, hedonically, or socially grounded incentives (Kim et al., 2013). Hedonic incentives refer to the search for pleasurable and delightful sensations, whereas functional incentives reflect spectator's judgments. Hedonic incentives refer to the search for pleasurable and delightful sensations, whereas functional incentives reflect spectator's judgments. Furthermore, aspiring assessments of the team and sponsoring firm are influenced by social motives. These motives and assessments, which are primarily responsible for supporters' strong involvement with a team, result in a positive attitude toward the sponsoring firm and a desire to purchase its goods/services. It is claimed that as supporters' involvement with the team grows, so does their probability of identifying the team's sponsors, forming a favorable attitude toward them and being more prone to support the sponsorship relationship. Furthermore, consistent participation in and love for sports, as seen by in-role and extra-role involvement, is said to impact supporters' attitudes and purchase intentions toward sponsoring firms (Close et al., 2006).

Spectators' perceptions of the aim of sponsorship are linked to beliefs. Beliefs are the associations individuals make between an item (in this case, sport sponsorship) and certain advantages or repercussions (e.g. favorable attitudes toward the company; Madrigal, 2001). Beliefs, according to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975, p. 14), operate as "the informative basis that eventually affects attitudes, intentions, and behaviors." Furthermore, Madrigal (2001) suggested that fans hold positive or negative beliefs regarding the benefits of sponsorship for the team, according to attitude theory: fans may appreciate the benefits of sponsorship, such as helping the team, facilitate the organization of an event, supporting community, and so on. This belief connects a favorable judgment to an attitude object (for example, sponsorship)” (p. 149). For others, sponsorship may be considered as a means of changing the nature of sport in order to earn financial benefit. As a result, they may be more likely to influence negative perceptions about sponsorship (Koronios et al., 2021).

For recent decades, the utilization of sport sponsorship as a marketing communication strategy to support a company achieve commercial goals (e.g., enhancing brand reputation, boosting revenue) is on the increase. Companies are interested in sport sponsorship because they believe that spectators want to support firms that assist sports (d’Astous et al., 2020). When this is not the case, as Simmons and Becker-Olsen (2006) demonstrate, customers are more likely to speculate on the reasons behind the company's sponsorship and to have negative sentiments, which will reduce their desire to buy as well as to suggest the sponsoring firm's products. Supporters are more likely to ascribe intrinsic (i.e., the company's assistance for the team is sincere) or extrinsic (i.e., the company's support is motivated by profit-seeking motives) reasons to sponsoring firms, according to sponsorship literature (Rifon et al., 2004). The above two motives may be regarded of as the motive-inferred endpoints of a sponsor-sponsee partnership continuum that ranges from sincere (one-sided resource transfer) to transactional (reciprocal resource exchange) actions (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012). Since sincere relationships result in more positive customer reactions (d’Astous & Bitz, 1995), sport sponsorship agreements should be anticipated as a legitimate development within such a collaborative continuum. While sincerity has been found to be an important predictor of higher-level sponsorship effects, virtually no previous research has attempted to incorporate this factor into a holistic sponsorship framework, as a significant antecedent of sport sponsorship effectiveness during a crisis period.

The epidemic of Covid-19 caught several nations off guard, resulting in rapidly rising levels of patient populations and high mortality rates worldwide, making individuals understandably concerned about this growing crisis. Stressful situations and societal emergencies, such as the Covid-19 outbreak, are known to increase levels of anxiety and a loss of control (Srol, 2021). Sorokowski et al. (2020) discovered that simply being exposed to knowledge regarding COVID-19, resulted in increased anxiety levels. Latest researches have also shown that the degree of anticipated threat, anxiety, and desperation risen dramatically after the first deaths were published (Srol et al., 2021) and that individuals generally are extremely worried about the coronavirus,
becoming severely ill, or the infection of their family members with COVID-19 (American Psychiatric Association, 2020). In this study, beliefs about COVID-19 safety precautions, subjective norm beliefs, and anticipated control beliefs all have an impact on future sport event consuming patterns and as a consequence on sponsorship effectiveness. If a sports fan trusts physical separation and mask wear, has the approval of family members and friends, and has control over how protected he or she is, the chance of attending spectating sporting events will certainly improve (Kaplanidou et al., 2021).

Brand awareness is widely utilized as a crucial outcome for assessing brand building marketing initiatives, such as sponsorship (Zaharia et al., 2016). Moreover, brand awareness influences customer decisions when they are selecting merchandise among rival brands (Jensen et al., 2016). Brand awareness is described as a tool that emphasizes the definition and generation of a target audience's familiarity and recognizability with a certain brand (Foroudi, 2019). When people are aware of the brand, it is more likely to be chosen over lesser-known brands (Foroudi, 2019). Brand awareness pertains to the degree of a brand's existence in the consciousness of an individual; it signifies those customers are aware of the brand and can recall and/or recognize it. When a brand is the first to be remembered instinctively, it has acquired top of mind awareness (Liu et al., 2015). Previous research confirms and underlines the point that firms use sponsorship to enhance brand awareness by associating the sponsored event to the company's name (Koronios et al., 2021). The capability of individuals to accurately recognize and recall a brand is a key for the success of a sponsorship agreement (Chebli & Gharbi, 2014). Sponsorship introduces sponsor's brand to sport audiences; as a consequence, supporters should be able to recognize and recall the brand, resulting in increased purchase intents.

Individuals’ attitudes are widely perceived a function of cognition in marketing field (Fishbein, 1965). Furthermore, attitudes have a significant impact on behavior (Fazio, 1986). Indications of a link among attitudes and behavioral intention has been verified, notably in the advertisement, communication, and sponsorship domains (Yoshida et al., 2015). Purchase intention is assumed to be a function of brand attitude in the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Furthermore, the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) confirms the notion that brand attitude drives to the generation purchase intentions. Recent advances in attitude intention models, on the other hand, have introduced a new perspective that gives possible reasons for the attitude-intention gap (Claudy et al., 2013). Behavioral reasoning theory (Westaby, 2005) extends attitude-intention models by incorporating situation-specific reasons of intention development, such as team supporters developing rationalization or defense mechanisms to develop purchase intentions. Given the lack of agreement on the constancy of the attitude-intention relation, it might be important to investigate if an individual’s attitude transforms into purchase intents for the sponsors’ merchandise. According to this study, viewers who have a positive attitude toward sponsoring firms are more inclined to buy their products. Spectators with high degrees of awareness, form more favorable attitudes regarding sponsoring firms and are more likely to purchase their goods and services (Madrigal, 2000). This research, consequently, has the intention to explore the relation among spectators’ attitudes about sponsors and their purchase intentions regarding their goods and services.

For the majority of marketing officials, estimating the ROI of sponsorship expenses remains a complex issue (Jensen & Cobbs, 2014). Behavioral intentions were identified as a significant antecedent to actual behavior in the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The behavioral intentions of consumers are examined in order to determine a product's or service's market acceptability (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). Purchase intention was defined as customers’ assessment of their provicity to purchase a particular brand in the near term (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). In multiple sectors, research has demonstrated the importance of intentions as a precursor to actual behavior (Trivedi, 2020). Studies Researchers in the field have already demonstrated a link between sport sponsorship and buying intentions (Madrigal, 2000). Purchase intentions were identified by Howard and Crompton (1995) as the most relevant indications of the sponsorship's influence. Whereas earlier research has concentrated on either the antecedents affecting sponsorship awareness or the relationship among sponsorship and purchase intentions (Biscaia et al., 2017), no systematic approach integrating these perceptions has been established to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing sponsorship effectiveness during the Covid-19 crisis. This is critical in providing managers with a framework or strategy for enhancing the efficacy of sponsorship agreements during a crisis. The findings of this research may improve the understanding of how sport consumers shape their attitudes and behaviors toward the products and services of sponsors when they cut off access to their leisure alternatives due to unanticipated incidents. In accordance with the literature, the following model and hypotheses are put forward:
H1: Spectators’ involvement with sport influences awareness of and attitude toward sponsors
H2: Spectators’ beliefs about sponsorship influence awareness of and attitude toward sponsors
H3: Sincerity of the sponsors influence spectators’ awareness of and attitude toward sponsors
H4: Spectators’ beliefs about Covid-19 influence awareness of and attitude toward sponsors
H5: Awareness of sponsoring firms is expected to affect spectators’ purchase intentions
H6: Attitude toward sponsors is expected to affect spectators’ purchase intentions

Methodology
A total of 1,182 online questionnaires were successfully gathered from spectators of the EURO 2020 football tournament, which in turn were analyzed by SPSS and AMOS. The Covid-related variable was based on Kaplanidou, Apostolopoulos and Cho’s (2021) work. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, anchored with strongly disagree (1), and strongly agree (5).

Results
A total of 1,182 men (n=872, 73.8 %) and females (n=310, 26.2 %) participated in the research. The majority of the study's participants were between the ages of 25 and 42. (41.7%). The Pearson correlation coefficient between the factors is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Covid-19 attitudes are strongly linked with beliefs regarding sponsorship (0,731) and purchase intention in this respect (.812). Explanatory factor analysis was used to determine the model's factor loadings. The volatility of the factor loadings was 0.252, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test result was notably high, and the chi-square test result was satisfactory. SEM analysis was utilized to test the Hypotheses H1-H6, presented in Table 1. The multivariate structural equation model (SEM) demonstrates that two major variables contributed to the strength of purchase intention throughout the EURO 2020 competition: sponsor awareness (.502) and attitude toward the sponsor (.574). Following that, the data are used to corroborate the best-fitting criterion (normed 2=12.8, CFI=.907, RMSEA=.046).

Table 1: Regression Weights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affect</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1: Sport involvement → Sponsor</td>
<td>0.241</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2: Beliefs about sponsorship → Sponsor</td>
<td>0.448</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3: Sincerity → Sponsor Attitude</td>
<td>0.337</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4: Covid-19 Beliefs → Sponsor Attitude</td>
<td>0.295</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5: Sponsor Awareness → Purchase</td>
<td>0.502</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6: Sponsor Attitude → Purchase</td>
<td>0.574</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion
With the objective of elucidating spectators' purchase intentions for sponsors' goods and services during a timeframe of irregularity and unpredictability (i.e., the COVID-19 pandemic), this research suggests a model grounded in theory and data that can be used by actual or potential sponsors to determine how to increase the effectiveness of sponsorship in the era of COVID-19, while taking spectators' beliefs about COVID-19-related into account. The results of this study add to the sparse literature on the influence of COVID-19 on the success of sport sponsorships in a timely and meaningful manner. Based on multivariate econometric model of SEM we found that Purchase intention effected directly by the Attitude toward sponsor and Sponsor Awareness.

References


A typology of minimal homepage design: the case of global fashion brands

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Abstract:

Homepages, the so-called “company’s face to the world”, constitute the most significant part of websites (Nielsen & Tahir, 2001, p. 1). The design of websites or homepages incorporates a number of dimensions ranging from colors and shapes to symmetry and arrangement of elements. Previous studies suggest that the integration of particular website design dimensions, such as information content, information design, navigation design, and visual design (Cyr, 2013; Hasan, 2016) influence consumers’ attitudes and emotions (i.e., pleasure) (Porat & Tractinsky, 2012), aesthetic perceptions (Tuch, Bargas-Avila & Opwis, 2010) and patronage intention (i.e., interaction, willingness to stay, purchase intention, intention to revisit) (Zhang, Fiore, Zhang, & Liu, 2020).

Minimalism as a design movement is associated with numerous fields ranging from architecture (Stevanovich, 2013) to marketing (i.e., advertising, logo and packaging design) (Margariti et al., 2021; Margariti, 2021; Pracejus, Olsen, & O’Guinn, 2006; Sharma & Varki, 2018). Minimal design in architecture is associated with simplicity and modern affluence. In the context of advertising, minimal design elements, such as “white” space is associated with notions of high quality, aesthetics, and elegance (Pracejus, Olsen & O’Guinn, 2006), that are communicated via its simplicity and parsimony in colors, shapes, forms and elements. A recent study by Margariti, Boutsouki, Hatzithomas and Zotos (2017) introduces a typology of minimal, print advertisement. It highlights some of the most exceptional minimal design characteristics, such as extended, monochrome and in shades of gray “white” space, limited in extent and number images of simple geometry, limited, monochrome text, mainly in shades of grayscale.

In the context of website design, Soderstrom, Carlsson and Mejtoft (2019) support that a minimalistic designed webpage is, among others, clean and simplistic, while a number of studies have linked minimal design with the use of extended “white” space (Liu & Ko, 2017; Zong, Wang, &Zong, 2008). Additionally, Rosen and Purinton (2004) underline that adopting a minimalist approach in designing a website means redundancy in information overload and complexity, and prevalence of simplicity. In a similar vein, Tuch, Bargas-Avilaand Opwis (2010) suggest that symmetry, balance, and clarity, as a “less-is-more” approach in web design, restricts visual information which in turn reduces visual complexity. Interestingly, Nielsen Norman Group (2015) analysis on 112 minimal websites unveiled five main features of minimalism, thereby, flat design (i.e., no highlights, shadows and gradients), reduction in color schemes (i.e., monochromatic color palette, mainly in gray, white and black), incorporation of negative (“white”) space, dramatic typography (i.e., bold and large typography, variations in style) and few features and elements (i.e., menu items, links, images, fonts, icons etc). Among others, large images in the background and grid layout constitute additional minimal design characteristics (Nielsen Norman Group, 2015).

In the digital retail environment, creativity has a crucial role especially in the fashion brand industry. Fashion brands can achieve brand loyalty and trust by applying an effective web design, since design prevails in this particular industry (Vilaridi, 2020). Fashion brands utilize combinations of various platforms, such as websites and social media (Dhaoui, 2014), to communicate their information and aesthetic to the public and assist consumers to their purchase decisions (Berthon et al., 2012). Loureiro, Cavallero and Miranda (2018) suggest that the perceived quality of fashion brands’ website is measured by website content quality (i.e., ease of use, clarity and accuracy), technical quality (i.e., ease of navigation and interactivity) and information quality (i.e., relevancy and sufficiency of information) (Aladwani, 2006).

In the luxury fashion context, Kluge, Königsfeld, Fassnacht and Mitschke (2013) focus on four design characteristics of a luxury brand website: the incorporation of harmonized and darker background colors,
use of a larger or full screen space to present the stage content, horizontal navigation bars, and the substantial reduction of elements and features. Similarly, Kim and Lee (2015) suggest that, among others, web atmospheric qualities in luxury fashion brand websites are the balanced layout, the overall, extended background web site image, and the attractive background colors.

Nevertheless, despite the potential, positive impact of a website design on the effectiveness of e-strategies of a (fashion) brand, and the scattered references in various disciplines on minimal design features, to date, there is no consolidated definition of a minimal website, especially in the context of fashion brands, as well as a typology of specific, minimal website design characteristics in terms of information, navigation and visual content and design.

Consequently, based on a quantitative content analysis of fashion brands’ websites (homepages) and an in-depth examination of previous studies (Coursaris & Kripintris, 2012; Cyr, 2013; Margariti et al., 2017; Soderstrom, Carlsson, & Mejtoft, 2019), this research seeks to develop a consolidated definition and a typology of minimal characteristics in fashion brands’ websites. The websites of the brands to be analyzed are selected from a list of the most valuable fashion brands in 2020 (Fashion United, 2020) and Deloitte’s report on the top 100 luxury fashion brands (Deloitte, 2021). Furthermore, the websites are classified according to the four main dimensions; information content, information design, navigation design and visual design (Cyr, 2013). The “information content” dimension consists of four subcategories that refer to (a) the number of words, (b) the number of headers, (c) the relevance of information, (d) the extent of text. The element “information design” consists of six subcategories that refer to (a) the balance of text, (b) the organization of text, (c) the text layout (list/array), (d) the font homogeneity/heterogeneity, (e) the text’s number of colors, (f) the actual colors of text. “Navigation design” refers to (a) the number of submenus, (b) the simplicity/complexity of layout, (c) the homogeneity/heterogeneity of website layout and (d) number of links. The “visual design” refers to (a) the extent of “white” space, (b) the extent of image(s), (c) the number of colors of “white” space, (d) the colors of “white” space, (e) the number of colors of image(s), (f) the colors of image(s), (g) the geometry of images, (h) the presence/absence of models/celebrities, (i) the presence/absence of animations, (j) the presence/absence of videos, (k) the number of auto-run videos, (l) the presence/absence of graphic effects.

As suggested in the literature, extended, monochrome “white” space constitutes the most salient element of minimal design (Liu & Ko, 2017; Margariti et al., 2021; Pracejus, Olsen & O’Guinn, 2006; Zong, Wang & Zong, 2008). Thus, the present paper proposes that a minimalist (fashion brand) website should at least include an extended monochrome “white” space. Building on this assumption, a fashion brand website is included in the consideration set of the study only if it incorporates an extended and/or monochrome “white” space. The websites are content analyzed by two independent coders (a male and a female one) to enhance the reliability of the study. A one sample chi-square analysis will be conducted to unveil the design characteristics of minimal websites of fashion brands.

It is expected that the outcomes of the analysis will confirm and extend the observations in the current business trend, thereby, the proliferation of minimal design features in fashion brand websites. For instance, fashion brand websites are likely to incorporate extended, monochrome “white” space, large background images, balanced and harmonized textual and visual content, restricted (though relevant) information, while at the same time, reduced other elements and features, such as links, animations, auto-run videos.

On a final note, it is advocated that the current study will provide fruitful insights to both researchers and online marketing managers. It develops a typology of minimal website in the context of fashion industry, where design is proved to be highly significant for the aesthetic appreciation of brands. It introduces a useful tool that determines the information, navigation and visual content and design of minimal fashion brands’ websites.

**Keywords:** website design, minimalism, “white” space, fashion brands, content analysis

**References:**


Rebranding Greece? Finding the missing links

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Abstract

Nowadays, countries are trying to maintain and share their imitable identity by promoting their special features which consists of imperceptible and perceptible elements. Country branding incorporates this whole strategy as refers to a process in which a country holds a unique brand positioning in the minds of people, stakeholders, and potential customers. In recent years, the brand “Greece” has been negatively affected by various factors such as economic crisis, immigration, coronavirus & environmental crisis. The present survey examines the elements that shape brand “Greece” (especially in tourism sector), whether Greece needs a new strategic approach and whether new elements need to be added or existing ones need to be modified.

Initially, a literature review is conducted on the nation branding, crises that affect Greece, Greece’s competitors, and its position on the world landscape and then the importance of certain elements for positively influencing brand “Greece” and the impact of campaigns and color on nation marketing. Consequently, the methodology is reported, on which the work was based and the quantitative-qualitative analysis of the findings from the questionnaire and the interviews by executives in the tourism industry.

Finally, the paper draws a conclusion and provides recommendations based on literature review, questionnaire, and interviews, but also proposes a new Greek campaign called “Greece is the New Blue”.

Conspicuous and inconspicuous luxury brands: new model with two mediate variables for developed consumer-brand relationship theory

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Abstract:

The purpose of this research is to analyze the antecedents that helps create a strong emotional relationship between the consumer and brands – brand love - and its consequences at the level of luxury brands, distinguishing between conspicuous and inconspicuous luxury brands (Bairrada, Coelho, & Coelho, 2018; Gyomlai, Ahearne, Rouziès, & Kapferer, 2021; Kapferer, 2017; Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016; Ko, Costello, & Taylor, 2019; Lee, Bae, & Koo, 2021). A new conceptual model was developed that relate the concept of brand love (what establishes the relationship of the consumer with the brand) (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) and its antecedents (consumer-based brand authenticity, self-expressive brand perception, personal orientation toward luxury brands and congruence with the internal self) and consequents (brand loyalty, premium price, positive word-of-mouth) (Bairrada et al., 2018; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Two mediate variables were considered in the conceptual model – consumer-based brand authenticity (Bruhn, Schoenmüller, Schäfer, & Heinrich, 2012; Fritz, Schoenmueller, & Bruhn, 2017) and brand love (Gumparthi & Patra, 2020). A multigroup analyses was conducted to verified is exist differences between Generation Y and Generation X (Giovannini, Xu, & Thomas, 2015; Kapferer & Michaut, 2019).

The methodology followed in this empirical research is a quantitative methodology. The collection of primary data was based on a single instrument - the questionnaire survey, in the various studies involved. In the statistical analysis of the data, the structural equations modeling technique was used, and all the statistical analysis related to this technique, using PLS-SEM (Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Gudergan, 2017).

It can be concluded that to establish a strong emotional relationship between the consumer and the luxury brands, the most important constructs are the consumer-based brand authenticity (CBBA) (Morhart, Malär, Guèvremont, Girardin, & Grohmann, 2015; Oh, Prado, Korelo, & Frizzo, 2019) and the expressive self-image (SE) (Kumar & Kaushik, 2022). In regards on brand authenticity, this research support previous work in which investing and building an authentic luxury brand through its positioning strategy is desirable for companies with luxury brands and for consumers (Fritz et al., 2017). In addition, it can be concluded that the use of antecedents to the brand love, in establishing a strong emotional relationship between the consumer and luxury brands, should be used in management, as they evidenced the importance of the self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2009), in some of its many facets in establishing the relationship, allowing consumers to have desired behaviours: brand loyalty, willingness to pay a premium price and make a positive word-of-mouth.

**Keywords**: Consumer-brand Relationship, Brand Love, Conspicuous Luxury, Inconspicuous Luxury, SEM, Multigroup Analysis.

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Can Green Marketing Strategies Affect Customer Experience? Insights from Green Hotels

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Abstract:
Green hotels have been thoroughly addressed in the literature. That also applies for green marketing strategies and customer experience, as in recent years they have been increasingly researched by the scientific community. The present study attempts to connect green marketing strategies and customer experience in a technology intensive environment and seeks to explore whether the implementation of green strategies positively contribute to customer experience in the hotel industry. In particular, the article refers to green hotels, the green culture that they promote through the marketing activities they follow, as well as their effects on customer experience. Specific green actions that these hotels implement are presented and results are extracted in relation to perceived guest experience. According to the study insights, today’s green strategies have penetrated many businesses, such as hotels and a green lifestyle has been adopted by many consumers. Customers who usually choose to stay in a green hotel are usually environmentally sensitive ones, having a feel-good experience, while contributing to the protection of the environment. The study introduces a conceptual framework depicting the relationships between green hotels’ strategies and CX incorporating also other key consumer behavioural variables and digital technologies.

Keywords: Green hotels, Customer Experience (CX), Green Marketing Strategies, Environmental Sustainability

1. RESEARCH MOTIVATION AND OBJECTIVES
Companies’ efforts to offer a good experience to customers is continuous and the way to achieve it, in order to satisfy their own goals, changes over the years. Evolving market needs and emerging consumer behaviour patterns have led to many changes in business, products and services. Climate change, the creation of many environmental organizations and the heaps of environmental information that people receive daily are some of the elements of today. More and more companies and citizens are adopting a green way of living. In addition, small and large businesses are looking for new ways to operate, in order to be competitive and cater for all types of consumers. Also, there is a dearth of studies examining travelers’ experience in relation to green hotels.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE
2.1 Green Marketing Strategies
Nowadays, green strategies are widespread in the market and society and are the subject of many research initiatives. Businesses and the marketing industry are keenly interested in such activities (Dahhan and Arenkov,
Governments are now demanding green sustainability in all sectors of society, while companies crave for competitive advantages and higher profitability through green strategies (Dahhan and Arenkov, 2021). Environmental sustainability is gradually gaining attention in business around the world (Kallmuenzer et al., 2018). The call for corporate environmental awareness and sustainable development has intensified due to the global climate change and new market legislations (Chan et al., 2014). Presently, environmentally sensitive strategies or green strategies implemented by a company are part of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and according to Contini et al. “the social CSR and environmental CSR domains focus on the direct interactions between firms and the social and natural environment respectively” (Contini et al., 2020, p.1). In fact, in the past, various researchers have stressed on the importance of CSR and especially on green strategies, whereas it is reported that their existence usually has a positive effect on consumers (Sen and Bhattacharya 2001; Huang and Cheng, 2016). Furthermore, a very important finding from a previous study is the statement of Contini et al. (2020) that the existence of high environmental recognition of a business by consumers, leads to high consumer loyalty. Companies with deep environmental awareness are the ones that also create the deepest emotional relationships with their customers (Contini et al., 2020). Although it seems quite difficult for managers to choose the best CSR practice for their companies, today it is estimated that the implementation of environmental actions has increased, and many companies are promoting their green version daily with the help of various digital and non-digital channels. This phenomenon of coexistence of physical stores and digital media has penetrated the operation of many companies to meet the needs of the retail market and is called by many researchers “Omnichannel” (Mosquera et al., 2017). They also point out that the implementation of Omnichannel by companies is in fact a new business strategy that can enhance the efforts of companies. Small and large businesses tend to have a more sustainable and greener behaviour during production of products and provision of services according to Ahmed et al. (2019). “Green are the actions that reduce the impact on the environment, such as the ecological market or recycling” according to Wolfe and Shanklin (2001, p.209). Mahmoud (2018) cited green marketing as a holistic strategic management process, in which companies can identify, anticipate and meet the needs of their customers in a way that does not adversely affect the environment, while at the same time the price of products and services would be accessible to consumers. The introduction of green marketing in companies began in the 80’s (Dahhan and Arenkov, 2021), however today its presence is more obvious, and, in many cases, it represents the main business strategy. In a study of Wilson in 2015, a sustainable business model was presented, which includes three dimensions: “social, environmental and economic” or “people, planet and profit” (Figure 1.). This arose from the study of the term “triple bottom line” was coined by Elkington in 1994 and refers to the three areas of sustainability.

![Figure 1. The three dimensions of sustainable business models (Wilson, 2015)](image_url)

According to Wilson (2015), all businesses must give emphasis to economic, environmental, and social issues. Dahhan and Arenkov (2021) based on Figure 1, stated that the use of natural resources by companies should not be harmful for the environment and simultaneously they should have a profitable perspective for them. Also, those authors stated that if the managers want to create a good image for their organization, people should be aware of the socially responsible face of a company. Thus, companies should promote their CSR activities. There are many ways for a company to convince that it is pursuing a green strategy, either through its products, through its services, or through various other actions. Green products help conserve energy, reduce, or
avoid the use of toxic substances in production and protect natural resources (Karunarathna et al., 2020), as they are made from non-toxic or recycled materials. In addition, it is well known that many businesses today use environmentally friendly packaging.

All the above is reinforced by the study of Haq et al. in 2021, who concluded that the creation of effective green products by a company that follows a green marketing strategy plays an important role in its profits and image. They reported that green companies usually earn, in addition to profits, customer respect and loyalty. In short, the implementation of green strategies by companies is no longer just an option, but it also become imperative for them. This is because companies that are not engaged in sustainable development or do not plan to integrate green strategies into their culture in the future, will sooner or later be out of the market due to intense competition and increased social interest in environmental issues (Dahhan and Arenkov, 2021).

2.2 Green Hotels

Hotels are a fundamental part of tourism. Tourism is an industry of great economic importance and one of the most evolving in the world. According to Merli et al. (2019), tourism constitutes the 10.4% of global gross domestic product (GDP), while employing a large number of employees. However, even if the tourism industry offers a lot to society, it does not mean that it only contributes positively. In a study of 2013 (Pang et al., 2013), it was reported that the tourism industry is having a negative impact on the environment. Moreover, several studies (Pang et al., 2013; Lenzen et al., 2018) reported that the tourism industry is causing an increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Of course, it has been stated that this environmental degradation in turn negatively affects the tourism industry (Gosling and Peeters, 2015; Smith, 1990). For the aforementioned reasons, climate change and tourism are considered to be closely linked.

Therefore, the tourism industry seeks to find solutions for its sustainability through environmental contribution. Many examples of companies that have adopted green strategies are found in the tourism sector, such as hotels. Society requires hotels to pay more attention to environmental issues (Chan et al., 2018). In addition, hotels belong to a very competitive market and the only way to be successful is to be innovative and create a valuable customer experience (Yong and Derong, 2012). This is because nowadays more and more customers demand to have a green accommodation (Yi et al., 2018). Thus, managers try to create hotels with a green conscience. The implementation of green strategies is increasing in hotels both for their own benefit by reducing their costs, and for the benefit of society by contributing environmentally (Nimri et al., 2020).

In recent years, a greener lifestyle has penetrated the culture of all companies (Yu, et al., 2017), while at the same time maintaining a more environmentally friendly consumer profile. More and more hotels are following environmental strategies (Verma and Chandra, 2016), while recreating a green culture for their brand. According to Rahman et al. (2012), hotels with a green character contribute to the environment and at the same time help for a healthier lifestyle. This view also applies to some other authors such as Nimri, Patiar, & Kensbock in 2017. They stated that travelers prefer a hotel that incorporates environmentally friendly strategies, because they believe that staying in such hotels can help protect the environment (Nimri et al., 2017). But what exactly are the characteristics of a green hotel and how can one define a green hotel? Abdou et al. (2020), Green Hotels Association (2012), Kim and Han (2010) and Han et al. (2009) have provided information that can help define green hotels. According to them, green hotels are environmentally friendly accommodations that follow various green practices for the protection of the earth. Specifically, they mentioned practices such as saving water (e.g., by installing water-efficient devices) and energy, recycling and reusing durable service items (e.g., towels, etc.)

Also, Fredericks (2020) in her article mentions many ways in which a hotel can go green. The use of smart showers, the solar energy installations, the existence of room sensors that automatically detect light levels, the thermostats with fullness sensors that regulate heating and AC temperatures, the use of recycling systems and paper products are just a few examples to which Fredericks refers.

On the other hand, it is reported that green strategies can bring, in addition to financial benefits to hotels, a strong positive image for their brand (Berezan et al., 2014; Rahman et al., 2012). Jeong and Jang (2010) argued for the same benefits, due to consumers' understanding of their environmental contribution and consequently their social ones. Furthermore, Berezan et al. (2014) found that most of the green hotel customers seemed willing to pay extra for green services. Gao & Mattila in 2014, also stressed that the guests of green hotels are more satisfied than others and feel that they have a better experience. Of course, the intensity of the impact on each customer is different, as reported by Millar and Baloglou (2011). Chan (2013) states that an effective way to promote green hotels is through the internet. Hence, hotels can use both digital (e.g social media) and non-digital channels (e.g., reception), with the implementation of an Omnichannel strategy, in order to fulfil such purposes.

According to Merli et al. (2019), the customers of green hotels realize their environmental impact as positive. There is a high satisfaction during their stay at these hotels and a significant influence on their general experience (Merli et. al, 2019). The results of this study also reveal that guests who choose to stay to a hotel
with environmental commitment, become loyal to this kind of hotel. Also, consumers who are unsure of the benefits of a green hotel are more likely to stay in an environmentally friendly hotel than others who are unsure of the benefits (Chen & Tung, 2014). Lack of knowledge, but also other factors, such as the cost and location of a green hotel, can prevent a consumer from staying in it (Nimri et al., 2017). In short, right conditions should be met for a green hotel to be preferred by consumers. Some consumers may tend to be proud of staying in a green hotel, because of their environmental sentiments (Nimri et al., 2020).

In addition, Han and Kim (2010) report that consumers who have had a previous green experience are more familiar with staying in a green hotel than others. The demand for green hotels is increasing from consumers and they are more aware of such offerings (Rahman and Reynolds, 2016). Therefore, hotels should promote their green features, in order to gain a competitive advantage over similar non-ecological accommodations (Han et al., 2010) and also, if green hotels strongly promote their contribution to the environment, they could influence consumers’ decision to stay in them and affect their lifestyle (Nimri et al., 2020).

In addition, the provision of quality services is very important for green hotels, something that determines customer satisfaction and the intention to repurchase according to Wen-Hwa et al. (2018). In their study (Wen-Hwa et al., 2018) they also state that the primary goal of green hotels is to provide energy saving and carbon reduction services. Usually, people assume that in order to achieve their primary goal, but also to prove their green culture, green hotels use quality products of green origin.

2.3 Customer Experience (CX)

In the recent past, many authors have researched the importance of customer experience in a business. Scott (2022) emphasizes the importance of the customer experience. He states that if companies are not interested in creating a positive experience for their customers, then they should be prepared to fail. He also states that “a bad customer experience is often the result of poorly documented, poor communication and poorly executed processes” (Scott, 2022, p.22). So, Scott implies that in order for businesses to achieve their market goals, they must first offer a positive experience to their customers. In 2016, Lemon and Verhoef reported that providing a company an unforgettable experience to its customer is very important, as it provides a competitive edge in the market and differentiation from other companies. Wen-Hwa et al. (2018) also report that customer satisfaction from a good experience leads to loyalty and the word-of-mouth phenomenon, which creates a positive expression for an organization.

Many definitions have been given from time to time for the customer experience concept. Berry et al. (2002) stated that the experience that customers receive from a company is a journey that begins before the purchase of a product or service, goes through the stage of purchasing a product / service and continues even after the delivery of the product / service. On the other hand, Grewal et al. (2017) stated that CX is essentially what the customer perceives to have received from a company after interacting with it, whereas Klaus and Maklan (2013, p.228) defined customer experience as “the customer’s cognitive and affective assessment of all direct and indirect encounters with the firm relating to their purchasing behavior”. Moreover, in 2011, Lemke and other researchers (p.846) reported in their study that CX is conceptualized as “the customer’s subjective response to the holistic direct and indirect encounter with the firm, and customer experience quality as its perceived excellence or superiority”. In short, one understands that the customer experience is what a consumer receives after connecting with a business, which causes him/her either a positive, negative or indifferent emotional reaction. In addition, in 2017, Rajnish et al. (p.642) stated that “the CX should be considered and treated as a holistic strategic process for customer value creation, diversification, customer satisfaction, loyalty and competitive advantage”.

Due to the ever-changing needs of the market and consumers, there is some confusion about identifying the factors that affect CX. A very common theory is that of Verhoef et al., (2009, p. 32), which states that CX is a multidimensional variable determined by many factors, some of which are controlled by retailers and others not. They presented a conceptual model of customer experience creation in which they analysed the factors that affect on CX (Verhoef et al., 2009). Some of these factors are connected with the social environment, price, retail brand etc. Socio-demographics, consumer attitudes and others were referred as consumer moderators that impact the relationship between the customer experience’s factors and CX (conceptual model of customer experience of Verhoef et al., 2009). They share the perspective that customers value their journey with the company holistically. Verhoef et al. are also reviewing separate literature on brand experience, service experience and the experience of the in-store social environment (Lemke et al., 2011). In 2009, Grewal et al. created their own conceptual framework for the research of the customer experience in retail. It includes factors such as promotion, price, merchandise, supply chain and location that can provide a superior customer experience. These can also lead to higher customer satisfaction and higher profits for a company.

Finally, another model was presented in a recent study (Mishra and Verma, 2022) that adds new data to emerging CX research and the customer decision-making journey. The useful information we draw from part of
this theoretical framework is that the CX is a multidimensional construction, as previously reported by Lemon and Verhoef (2016). Among other things, it also shows retail dimensions (e.g., retail atmosphere, retail pricing) and construction dimensions (e.g., brand advertising, freight packaging) that affect the CX.

3. IMPACT OF GREEN HOTELS ON CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

It is comprehensible that many aspects shown in Figure 1 are related to a company's decision to implement a green marketing strategy or not. In most cases, the impact of green hotels is that they provide a good experience to their customers. The hotels which are categorized as green hotels have advantages in comparison to ordinary hotels, because the recent years green hotels have created a better image in the market. More and more people want to be informed of how they can contribute to the environment and how to follow a greener lifestyle by adopting habits, which are more eco-friendly. Based on Figure 1, businesses which want to be sustainable should combine the three dimensions of economy, society and environment and give to their customers an unforgettable experience. The visitors of green hotels who realize their green strategies, usually want to participate to the protection of nature in this way. The feeling of such contribution makes them get satisfied and, also broadens their social sensitivity when buying green products and services. Furthermore, the existence of digital and non-digital channels can enhance the efforts of green hotels to influence the customer experience.

Even if the cost of use of the green products and services is higher, contemporary customers are willing to pay. These products and services have most of the times a better quality and are more health-conscious, the consumption of which leads to a positive customer experience. Moreover, the fact that customers who had a positive experience from a green hotel, usually have the tendency to repeat their stay to such an accommodation; the fact that the green hotels have increased, supports the increase of this demand from the customers. All of the above is supported by the theory of Wen-Hwa et al. (2018), who believe that the following terms interact with each other: "quality of service", "customer satisfaction", "loyalty" and "positive image of an organization".

The conceptual framework of Grewal et al. (2009) could in a way be a good management guide by the green hotels in order to succeed. The same happens with the model of Verhoef et al. (2009). Green hotels that can emphasize for example in a good green promotion, a good price for the green services or have a good green supply chain can offer a superior customer experience.

According to the model of Mishra and Virma (2022), there are some factors which affect the customer experience such as retail atmosphere, retail proximity, retail merchandising, retail pricing, merchandise packaging and others, while simultaneously these would lead to a customer decision such as a purchase of a product or not. Thus, anyone can understand that hotels with a unique aspect of a green atmosphere, with green products and services, with a valuable quality and price can impact on a positive customer experience and decisions. Most guests are satisfied with green hotel accommodation and their stay, which makes them seek that kind of touristic lodgings.

From the findings of this conceptual study emerges the following theoretical framework (Figure 2), which in addition to the relationship between green hotels and customer experience, illustrates other findings that can be further explored in a future study.
4. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of the present study is to explore the relationship between green hotels and customer experience as well as examine the role of digital technologies on this relationship. This study provides additional knowledge to existent literature and aims to contribute both to academic and business society.

The study also reports some new business perspectives and strategies for managers, while at the same time summarizes sustainable solutions for the environment. Also, it presents new directions for future research as extracted by the conceptual research approach employed by the study. A theoretical framework was also created that summarizes the findings of the study and highlights the important relationship between green hotels and customer experience.

Future research could investigate the relationships depicted in Figure 2. Factors such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, hotel reputation and repurchase, are elements that are determined by the experience that a customer will receive by green hotels. Also, investigating the moderating role of digital technologies on the relationship between green hotels’ marketing strategies and customer experience could also contribute both to theory and practice. In sum, since green culture has penetrated modern societies and more and more people want to invest in green hotels, such research could be effectively used as an initial guide.

Finally, this paper aims to contribute to the environmental consciousness and to further broaden green business deontology.

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Services Marketing
Service attributes affecting football fans’ satisfaction – evidence from online review comments on social media

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**Abstract**

Online consumer generated content (CGC) is increasing and provides a wealth of information for understanding customer behavior and specifically which service attributes affect customer satisfaction. The purpose of this study is to analyse online review comments of football team fans and determine the service attributes that affect their satisfaction. Review comments that appeared on Facebook and Twitter pages of 8 football teams (4 Greek and 4 European) were analysed. Results show that there are 6 service attributes that mainly affect customer satisfaction: Players, training and matches, football academies, events, team achievements, and fans. Each attribute is analysed based on whether each team has an ascending or descending performance. These service attributes show that the most significant parts of the services marketing mix that affect sport fan satisfaction are people, processes, physical evidence, promotion, and product. Significant implications for management are identified. Future research can extend the number of teams, do cross-country or quantitative studies or do longitudinal studies.

*Keywords: customer satisfaction, football fans, online review comments, service attributes*

**Introduction**

The creation and dissemination of online consumer generated content (CGC) in the form of online reviews provides a wealth of information that can be used by businesses to understand their customers and influence customer satisfaction and loyalty. Understanding customers is a key objective in service marketing research and critical for a successful business (Gummesson et al., 2014). Customers are increasingly active online and provide a wealth of information on their experiences and activities that affects other customers in their purchase decisions (Berthon et al., 2015; Wuenderlich et al., 2015). This information is publicly available, easily collected and presents new opportunities for more personalized, higher quality service (Rust & Huang, 2014; Guo et al., 2017). Previous research analyses online reviews and provides insights on the types of service attributes that affect customer satisfaction (Padma & Ahn, 2020; Berezina et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2016; Guo et al., 2017). However, these studies are focused on specific markets such as tourism and hospitality and electronic goods. This study aims to analyse review comments of professional football team fans and determine the service attributes that affect fan satisfaction.

**Literature review**

In today’s business environment that is characterised by the fast and powerful expansion of the electronic environment, the role played by consumer-generated content in buying decisions is significant and increasing rapidly. This user-generated content (UGC), the content that is created and uploaded by customers through the internet by non-media is known as electronicWOM (eWOM) (Cantallops & Salvi, 2014; Zanariah Bahtar and Muda, 2016). Online reviews is an important form of eWOM since they provide the necessary information to potential customers and help them make decisions (Ostrom et al., 2015; Yan et al., 2016). In fact, the importance of online reviews as sources of information is increasing rapidly and is expected to affect as much as 20-50% of online purchase decisions (Mathwick & Mosteller, 2016). Customers prefer to base their decisions on such personal recommendations and trust the information in reviews more than any other brand produced content (Mochalova & Nanopoulos, 2014; Gavilan et al., 2018; Yan et al., 2018).
Apart from providing information on products and services, online reviews also express customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction. High levels of satisfaction can lead to customer loyalty in the form of repurchase, referrals and favourable word of mouth (Anaza & Zhao, 2013; Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Shankar et al., 2003). Also, satisfaction can affect customer’s propensity to post online reviews (Ranaweera & Prabhu, 2003). Therefore, it is important for businesses to know which service attributes affect customer satisfaction. The analysis of customer reviews helps firms to understand customers’ satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Berezina et al., 2016; Radojevic et al., 2017). Various studies try to identify the antecedents of customer satisfaction in the tourism industry by analysing online reviews (Liu et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2019). Also, many researchers analyse the product or service characteristics that customers mention in their reviews in order to determine the antecedents of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Padma & Ahn, 2020; Berezina et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2016; Guo et al., 2017). This is extremely important since customer expectations of different service attributes have an important impact on consumer satisfaction (Zhang et al. 2021). However, the service attributes that are important for customer satisfaction differ from service to service. Most studies focus on specific markets such as tourism and electronic goods. The purpose of this study is to analyse online review comments of professional football team fans and determine the service attributes that affect their satisfaction.

Methodology

Research method
This study is qualitative and uses netnography to analyse online review comments of sport fans on social media. Netnography studies virtual populations or communities created in the internet environment. Netnography is acknowledged as very useful for the collection and analysis of online customer information (Kozinets, 1999; Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Catterall and Maclaran, 2002). Netnography is the evolution of ethnographic research in the internet environment and is particularly relevant today since customers are increasingly active online. It is non-intrusive and analyses secondary data, the information generated by the population studied during their interactions. Furthermore, netnography is an interpretive method since researchers analyse the data available in order to find meaningful information (Kozinets, 2002). In this study we use netnography to analyse review comments of professional football fans regarding their team as they appear in the teams’ social media pages. Then content analysis is used to categorize comments in each service attribute and characterise it as positive or negative.

Data collection and analysis
Positive and negative review comments that appear in Facebook and Twitter pages of 8 football teams were analysed, 4 Greek teams and 4 European teams. Two of each category were teams that have an ascending performance and two have a descending performance. Comments analysed appeared in social media pages of football teams up to the 25th of September 2021.

Results

The teams included in the analysis are Olympiakos, Panathinaikos, Panionios, Ionikos, Manchester United, Chelsea, Juventus, and Barcelona. The analysis of review comments resulted in the identification of 6 service attributes that mainly affect customer satisfaction: Players, training and matches, football academies, events, team achievements, and fans.

Results differ for teams with ascending performance and teams with descending performance. Specifically, we observe the following:

a. Players.
For teams with ascending performance player comments are very encouraging. For example, there were very encouraging comments for a new player of Olympiakos from New Guinea, Agiubou Camara that has impressed fans in his first few appearances. Also, for Ionikos, there were very positive comments on Facebook about the acquisition of a new player. Comments relate to the talent and the monetary value of players. In contrast, in teams with descending performance there are fan comments expressing their dissatisfaction with team players.

b. Training and matches.
In the big European football clubs with ascending performance, such as Chelsea, there are very positive fan comments including photos and videos regarding team matches and training sessions. In contrast, fan comments for Barcelona are negative both for training and matches and show the dissatisfaction of fans. There are
comments that relate to video excerpts of training sessions, the coach’s decisions in the match as well as the unsuccessful result of the game. The same trends appear in Greek football teams.

c. Football academies
Comments relating to football academies are also affected by the performance of teams. For teams with descending performance there are many negative comments relating to the use of players from football academies that are aggressive and ironic and include photos that make fun of the team (e.g. Barcelona) or the general quality of academies that provide low quality players (e.g. Panathinaikos). In contrast, for teams with ascending performance there are positive comments regarding the transfer of players from the academy to the main team (e.g. Manchester United) or the establishment of a new academy (e.g. Olympiakos).

d. Events
Comments relating to team events also depend on team performance. Even if events are good, comments regarding the events are negative due to the team’s performance. For example, Juventus organised an event for meeting a new player. However, comments expressed fears that the player will leave the team and that the coach does not use him properly in matches. In contrast, fans are excited about events organised by teams with good performance or by their sponsors especially if events are related to trophy awards or celebration of important successes. However, in Greek teams, fans are not engaged much on social media regarding team events. They provide very few comments or no comments at all. This may be due to the fact that most events in Greece are not related to trophy awards.

e. Team achievements
In teams with descending performance, both Greek and foreign, negative comments are the norm about the team and there are comparisons with the past. Comments are based on past descriptions of team’s winning games and express fans’ current dissatisfaction compared to “past great achievements”. In contrast, for teams with ascending performance the comparison of past and present has a positive sign since the present is about winning. Therefore, there are only positive comments regarding the team’s past and present achievements, and it is evident that fans are satisfied.

f. Fans
In Greek teams that are not doing very well we observe that fans may post negative comments about other fans or blame themselves for the low team performance saying for example that they should support the team more and they shouldn’t abandon the team now that performance is low. In foreign teams, fans are ashamed about the team’s performance but do not blame themselves. However, in teams doing well fans provide very positive comments about other fans and are proud to be fans of the team.

Managerial implications

Results present important implications for team management. First, the value of players, in terms of both talent and monetary value, affects customer satisfaction. Therefore, teams should manage the quality of players for maximum satisfaction. Furthermore, positive aspects of training sessions and matches that can promote a team and enhance its image for fans must be uploaded on social media in order to create a stream of positive comments and enhance fan satisfaction. Since the effect of football academies is related to team performance, the management of academies should try to relate all news of the academy to positive events of the team so that overall dissatisfaction carried over from the team performance decreases. Moreover, since the success of events is also dependent on team performance, teams should organise more events when their performance is better and link events with some type of award in order to satisfy fans. Also, the effect of the past on fan satisfaction with team achievements indicates that fan satisfaction is a longitudinal issue that is evolving through time and depends on team management. Finally, the sense of self blame experienced by fans in Greek football teams probably shows that it is related to the size of the teams. Fans of big foreign clubs are dissatisfied but do not blame themselves for team performance. Team management should try to eliminate self-blame since this can help in decreasing fan dissatisfaction.

It is particularly important to note that the categories of service characteristics identified in the review comments relate to certain parts of the team’s service mix. Specifically, the notion of people from the 7Ss framework of services marketing is clearly expressed by the importance of fans and players. Furthermore, training and matches are related to both processes of the team and physical evidence because they take place in the stadium. Events are part of the promotional mix of the team and football academies is part of the product mix of the team and is also related to players. At last, team achievements is the result of a successful service mix in total. We
therefore conclude that the most important parts of the services marketing mix for football fans’ satisfaction are people, processes, physical evidence, promotion and product.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

This study is based on 8 professional football teams. Also, the sample of teams is not necessarily representative of the population of football teams globally. Furthermore, the sample only includes teams of one sport and it is qualitative in nature. Finally, the present study was done during the Covid-19 outbreak when the communication of teams and fans was severely affected. Future research can use the result of this study to analyse how fan satisfaction is affected by various service attributes quantitatively and in various time points (e.g. after the Covid-19 era) or in different countries that have different cultures.

References


Effects Of Service Quality on Live Spectators’ Constraints in a Mega Esports Event

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Abstract:
The current study aims to investigate the effects of service quality on leisure constraints of live spectators in mega Esports events and explore any gender differences in these effects. A survey was administrated via e-mail to 147 (106 males and 41 females) live spectators of a mega Esports event in Greece. Results show that the most important constraint is the ‘individual/psychological’, whereas the less important is ‘lack of time’. Also, the most significant dimension of Service Quality is ‘responsiveness’ while the less important is ‘perceived outcomes’ and females are more satisfied with service quality than males for all five dimensions of Service Quality. Moreover, females appear to have significantly more constraints than males in most dimensions of Leisure Constraints. Finally, linear regression analysis shows that only the individual/psychological constraint is significantly predicted by four service quality dimensions, tangibles, personnel, responsiveness, and reliability. Results present implications for theory and practice. Results can help managers understand better spectator constraints and design appropriate marketing strategies to limit such constraints and increase attendance, improve satisfaction and the customer experience.

Keywords: Esports, mega-event, service quality, constraints

Introduction
Spectator attendance at sports events is a main area of interest for sport organizations, as revenue from ticket sales and sponsorships helps to keep up business operations (Mayer & Hungenberg, 2020). Commercial and technological growth in Esports has facilitated a significant increase in Esports spectator opportunities and behaviors (Fujak et al., 2018). Besides, the great reputation of Esports in the last few years has led many researchers to examine this phenomenon further. Nevertheless, most of the modern relevant research focuses on the economic dimension of the Esport industry (Chikish et al., 2019), legal and governance issues (Star & Bakshi, 2019; Joost, 2019; Ozkurt, 2019), and the perspective of players (Giakoni-Ramírez et al., 2022). However, although some attention is given to spectators who watch Esports on the internet since the foremost method of Esport spectatorship is conducted by live streaming broadcasts on YouTube, Twitch, or TV (OnGameNet - OGN, and SPOTV) (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017; Qian et al, 2019), little attention is given to live spectators. The aspect of physical presence should not be overlooked. The global Esports audience including both enthusiasts and occasional viewers and gamers is approximately 728 million (Newzoo, 2021). Besides, in the pre-Covid-19 period, live spectatorship in Esports events was massive. Live spectators in Esports events not only watch the games via monitors but also have the opportunity to attend exhibitions and cosplayers’ shows, and participate in side events that are organized by sponsors (Zagala & Strzelecki, 2019).

Esports in Greece are following the global trend and are growing rapidly. As a result, mega Esports events were organized several times per year in the pre-Covid-19 period. A significant portion of Greek gamers, who are estimated to be more than 500,000, participate in and attend live Esports events. More than 20,000 live spectators and gamers participated in the last annual Digital Expo mega Esports event that was organized in September 2019 in Athens. The event included more than 20 tournaments (LOL, FIFA 20, NBA2K20, Fortnite, Battlegrounds, Call of Duty, Tekken7, etc). The main reason for participating in these events is the pleasure and satisfaction offered by eSports. Service quality has a significant and positive connection to positive behavioral
intentions such as customer satisfaction (Ismail et al., 2017). However, sport spectators exhibit leisure constraints that affect their intention to participate in sport events even more so in Esports events (Gdonteli et al., 2020). This study aims to shed light on the effects of service quality on Greek Esports spectators’ leisure constraints.

Theoretical background

Electronic sports or Esports are competitive video games. Esports athletes play against other players offline (LAN) or online in competitive video games and tournaments and can be both amateur or professional players who often are called gamers (Kane & Spradley, 2017). Esports spectators can attend tournaments either via live streaming or live in indoor arenas.

Service Quality is an assessment of how an organization delivers its services compared to the expectations of customers, and it is associated with customer satisfaction (Gdonteli et al, 2011). Sport spectators expect a reasonable level of quality concerning the facilities and equipment, processes involved, and polite and competent staff of the venue (Voon et al., 2014). The Service Quality Model (SERVQUAL) (Parasuraman et al., 1988) measures service quality using the dimensions of reliability, personnel, tangibles, and responsiveness. Alexandris et al. (2004) add the dimension of ‘perceived outcome’. Researching service quality is very important in the sports industry since it can help managers design more efficient sport events and increase customer retention and satisfaction. Ismail et al. (2017) note that service quality has a significant and positive connection to positive behavioral intentions such as customer satisfaction. Although several studies show that service quality affects customer behavioral intentions such as satisfaction and loyalty (Lee, 2017), studies that support the negative relationship between service quality and behavioral intentions, namely customer constraints, are limited. The term “constraints” refers to the reasons for not engaging in leisure activities (Jackson, 1988). The theoretical model for the inhibiting factors in leisure activities was created by Crawford and Godbey (1987), who categorized the constraints in ‘interpersonal’ which refer to the internal barriers, ‘intrapersonal’ which refers to the intrapersonal interrelationships, and ‘structural’ which refer to the external barriers. The interpersonal constraints are connected with a lack of partners or other people to attend the sports activity with. The intrapersonal constraints are related to psychological states such as stress and lack of time. Finally, the structural constraints include access to events and ticket costs (Yamashita & Hallmann, 2021). Especially interpersonal and intrapersonal constraints constitute important barriers to sports spectatorship (Rocha & Fleury, 2017). Furthermore, Gdonteli et al. (2011) support the relationship between constraints and service quality among student intramural sports participants.

Considering the theoretical and practical importance of research in the area of service quality and customer constraints among live sports event spectators and the lack of relevant research, this study, draws on a sample of live spectators in a mega Esports event in Greece, to explore the effects of service quality on live spectators’ constraints. Also, the study aims to ascertain if there are any significant differences between males and females in these effects.

Methodology

Sample-Procedure

The sample includes 147 (106 males and 41 females) live spectators of a mega Esports event that took place in Athens just before the spread of coronavirus. Twenty days after the event two questionnaires, the Leisure Constraint Questionnaire – LCQ, and the SERVQUAL were administrated via e-mail to 200 gamers who were randomly selected from the participants' database. From these 147 responded. Their ages range from 19-27 years of age (M = 22.22, S.D. = 2.49).

Data collection and analysis

Data was collected with a structured questionnaire. Constraints were measured with The Leisure Constraint Scale (Alexandris & Carroll, 1999) that includes 22 items organized in four subscales (‘lack of time’, ‘individual / psychological’, ‘lack of services’, and ‘lack of partners’). All items were scored on a seven-point Likert - type scale ranging from 1 –very important to 7 –not important. Service Quality was measured with a scale adopted from Alexandris et al. (2004) and includes 26 items organized in five subscales namely ‘tangible’, ‘personnel’, ‘responsiveness’, ‘reliability’, and ‘perceived outcomes’. All items were scored on a seven-point Likert - type scale ranging from 1 –Strongly Disagree to 7 – Strongly Agree. Data was analysed with SPSS. Initially, descriptive statistics were used to show which dimensions are the most important for both service quality and leisure constraints. Then, the internal consistency of the subscales for both concepts was assessed.
using Cronbach’s alpha. Third, regression analyses were conducted to assess the relationships between service quality and constraints, and finally, gender differences for the different subscales were examined using multivariate and univariate analyses of variance.

**Results**

Internal consistency of both scales was examined with the Cronbach alpha coefficient that was higher than .70 for most dimensions except ‘perceived outcomes’ (α = .58) (see table 1). Descriptive analysis (see table 1) shows that the most significant constraint is the ‘individual/psychological’ (M = 3.78, S.D. = .26). Moreover, the most significant dimension of Service Quality is ‘responsiveness’ (M = 5.58, S.D. = .58), while the less important is ‘perceived outcomes’ (M = 4.75, S.D. = .42). Also, analysis according to gender shows that females are more satisfied with service quality than males in the five dimensions of Service Quality.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics for males and females**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M (S.D.)</td>
<td>M (S.D.)</td>
<td>M (S.D.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>5.83 (.36)</td>
<td>5.85 (.35)</td>
<td>5.83 (.35)</td>
<td>.701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>5.70 (.53)</td>
<td>5.72 (.52)</td>
<td>5.70 (.52)</td>
<td>.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>5.83 (.60)</td>
<td>5.93 (.52)</td>
<td>5.85 (.58)</td>
<td>.710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>5.63 (.69)</td>
<td>5.76 (.53)</td>
<td>5.67 (.65)</td>
<td>.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived outcomes</td>
<td>4.74 (.43)</td>
<td>4.78 (.42)</td>
<td>4.75 (.42)</td>
<td>.580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of services</td>
<td>3.52 (.81)</td>
<td>4.04 (.50)</td>
<td>3.67 (.77)</td>
<td>.704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual psychological</td>
<td>3.64 (1.07)</td>
<td>4.15 (.84)</td>
<td>3.78 (1.03)</td>
<td>.881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time</td>
<td>2.74 (1.15)</td>
<td>3.69 (1.29)</td>
<td>3.00 (1.26)</td>
<td>.918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of partners</td>
<td>3.27 (1.94)</td>
<td>3.45 (1.01)</td>
<td>3.33 (1.95)</td>
<td>.785</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, results show that females have significantly more constraints than males in most dimensions of Leisure Constraints. Table 2 provides the gender x constraints’ subscale multivariate analysis (Wilks’λ = .816, F (3.879) = 8.000, p = .000, η² = .096). The univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) shows statistically significant differences between males and females for the constraints of “lack of time” (F=9.475, df= 2, p=.000), “individual/psychological” (F=3.978, df=2, p=.021, and “lack of services” (F =7.442 df = 2, p = .001). These results show that females find these factors as stronger constraints than males.

**Table 2: Differences - F, Degrees of freedom and p between males and females**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of services</td>
<td>7.442</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>3.978</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.021*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>psychological</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack</td>
<td>9.475</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack</td>
<td>.552</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of partners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p<.001, *p<.01**

A further investigation of the relationship between service quality dimensions and leisure constraints reveals that only the individual/psychological constraint is significantly predicted by four dimensions of service quality, tangibles, personnel, responsiveness, and reliability (see table 3 - R² 76.3%). Also, table 4 shows that all independent variables (service quality dimensions) exceeded levels of statistical significance showing their contribution to the prediction model.

**Table 3: Model summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.873*</td>
<td>.763</td>
<td>.756</td>
<td>.21057</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors : (constant), reliab, person, tang, respon
The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of service quality on live spectators’ constraints in mega Esports events. Results show that the ‘individual/psychological’ constraint seems to be the most important and is affected significantly by service quality. Furthermore, we find that females experience stronger constraints than males. However, there is no significant difference for lack of partners. This finding goes against previous research concluding that most women face the constraint of lack of partners (Adam, 2014; Kontogiannis et al., 2006).

Moreover, results show that Esports live spectators are largely satisfied with the offered services because all dimensions of perceived service quality scored high (M > 4.75). However, results also show that only the individual/psychological constraint is significantly predicted by four service quality dimensions (tangibles, personnel, responsiveness, and reliability). The current study advances theory on the relationship between service quality and leisure constraints in sports and responds to related calls for research (Alexandris et al., 2004). However, findings also have significant implications for sport managers of mega Esports events. Results can help managers understand better spectator constraints and design appropriate marketing strategies to limit such constraints and increase attendance, improve satisfaction and the customer experience.

**Limitations – further research**

This study explores the effects of service quality on leisure constraints for live spectators of mega Esports events. However, the study is limited to a small sample of one event in Greece and the data is cross sectional. Future research can extend the sample, the number of events and model the relationships of service quality dimensions and leisure constraints. Also, future studies can be done both for virtual and live spectators.

**References**


Improving Healthy Food Experiences for Children: A Cross-cultural Qualitative Study

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Abstract:
We conceptualize and examine empirically healthy food experiences as value-in-use offerings. We study the learning process in the development of food beliefs and preferences of children (6-12 years-old). Building on the experiential learning theory (ELT), we emphasize on the experiential aspects before and during food consumption. We examine empirically the development of healthy food communication adopting a service science approach and a multi-stakeholder perspective that both focus on the study of experiential aspects in the entire food consumption process. With data from pupils in Germany, Greece, and the Netherlands, we apply a service science design that retrieves data from multiple-stakeholder sources. The key data come from workshops with children and other stakeholders (e.g. teachers, grandparents, parents), and expert interviews with project team members. Our results indicate that experiences are needed to mediate the ideas assimilated from the outside world in order to form new beliefs and preferences that, eventually, drive the consumption of healthy food products for children. Several external factors such as children contact with grandparents and TV cooking shows appear to important influence the formation of a child’s food beliefs’ and preferences’ development over time. Moreover, hedonic and functional benefits and need for expertise seem to influence healthy food experiences and should be accounted for the design of healthy food campaigns to children. Interestingly, the results also reveal cross-cultural diversity. Children in Greece are much more inclined to follow family eating habits and being influenced by their emotions and grandparents’ behaviour rather than children in the Netherlands and in Germany. Dutch and Greek children are less prone to hedonic benefits rather than German children. Altogether, these results demonstrate that when the application of a service science design allows us to gain crucial insights regarding the development of communication integral to healthy food experiences for children.

Keywords: healthy food, experience, service science design, value-in-use
Do store atmosphere and playfulness matter during the ongoing pandemic crisis?

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Keywords: Store atmospherics, playfulness, customer experiential value, pandemic crisis

Abstract
The purpose of this research is to check whether store atmosphere and playfulness matter during the ongoing pandemic crisis. To fulfill this purpose, we utilized an online self-administered survey in Greece using pretested scales from past research. The sample consisted of 400 adult consumers with recent experience in store settings. Findings revealed that store atmospheric cues remain influential in terms of experiential value and more specifically in terms of playfulness or hedonic value during the pandemic. However, an adjusted mix of atmospheric cues is important to trigger playfulness such as display, music, and color. Moreover, playfulness was proven to be a very strong precursor of repurchase intentions. Regarding the originality and value of this research, this study is the first to explore the antecedents and effects of playfulness on physical stores during the pandemic. As a result, a mix of atmospheric cues are proposed to strengthen playfulness, which is very important during the pandemic to outcome favorable behavioral intentions.

Introduction
Store atmospherics have been an over-researched topic in the last thirty years, unveiling various aspects of consumer behaviour (Gardner and Siomkos, 1986; Jalil et al., 2016; Singh et al., 2014; Blazquez et al., 2019). However, during the last two years of the COVID-19 crisis, most of the academic research has focused on virtual shopping and digital marketing strategies as a counter measure for retailers to adjust to reality (Mondol et al., 2021). However, according to Szymkowiak et al. (2021), store retailers need not to neglect their physical stores and stressed the importance of perceived in-store infection threat as a disruptor that has changed consumer behavior. Similarly, consumer experiential value is a driver of favorable behavioral intention and suggests a competitive advantage for visual retailers in terms loyalty (Muhammad et al., 2014). Since consumer behavior has shifted to necessary interaction and limited time in the physical stores (Szymkowiak et al., 2021), it is vital to explore whether experiential value and playfulness as a hedonic value preposition still plays an important role for retailers. This research is the first to explore the impact of atmospheric conditions on playfulness and whether playfulness drives repurchase intentions. The structure of this paper is the following: in the literature review and methodology sections the authors outline the conceptual framework and justify the validity of the research method. In the findings section, we present our evidence, using multiple and simple regression analysis. The conclusion and limitations are presented right after.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Store atmospherics
Store atmospherics suggest a plethora of conditions impacting feelings and experience of customers during decision making process (Hussain and Ali, 2015). Positive feelings during store encounters generate positive perceptions of in-store services, leveraging perceived quality and value (Jalil et al., 2016). According to Jalil et al. (2016), this includes retail design and layout which in turn generates strong emotional effects and attitudes which are important to forge strong behavioral intentions. Atmospheric stimuli are imperative to increase the consumer’s time inside the shop as a precursor of purchase intentions, customer satisfaction and favorable repurchase intentions (Hussain and Ali, 2015). Purchase experience on the other hand is directly and positively affected by atmospheric cues such as music, scent, lighting, color, cleanliness, temperature, and in-store display (Singh et al., 2014). Hence, the afore-mentioned atmospheric variables are expected to facilitate the formulation
of customer experiential value, suggesting a mediating factor for favorable behavioral outcomes (de Farias et al., 2014).

2.2 Customer experiential value

Customer experiential value concerns the value generated at the entire touchpoints via interactions with front-line employees and other customers and encounters with processes and physical evidence (de Farias et al., 2014). Theatrical retail aspects, along with entertainment, fun and higher levels of value co-creation also provide basic means of experiential value improvements (Keng et al., 2007). According to Holbrook (1994), customer experiential value ranges from intrinsic to extrinsic, reactive to active as well as from other to self-oriented customer experiential value.

Extrinsic value in a shopping context entails the satisfaction of utilitarian needs, whereas intrinsic experiential value includes playfulness and other hedonic aspects of in-shop experience (Keng et al., 2007). As for the second sphere of value, active value reflects the efficient use of store resources to generate satisfaction, whereas reactive value is related to the positive effect of the retailer’s physical environment, or the positive feelings produced via positive interactions with front-line personnel (Holbrook, 1994). The current study focuses on the under-researched active and intrinsic customer experiential value, which is also known as perceived playfulness. According to Kim (2002), playfulness includes entertainment, appeal to five senses, instant gratification, window shopping, social interaction, people watching and escaping from routines. According to de Farias et al. (2014) playfulness is hedonic in nature and is closely related to favorable behavioral intentions.

2.3 Behavioral outcomes

The basic behavioral outcomes related to a positive in-store experience comparing to an expected shopping experience include positive attitudes and feeling towards the retailer deriving from high overall quality perceptions (Singh et al., 2014). In case perceived quality is equal or greater than the expected quality, customer satisfaction is imminent forging favorable behavioral intentions (Holbrook, 1994). The latter include higher levels of purchase and repurchase intentions, higher levels of customer loyalty (both cognitive and behavioral), higher share of wallet as well as positive word of mouth, which is the best advertising for the retailer (Jalil et al., 2016). However, during the pandemic and because of the increased in-store infection threat, it is questionable whether store atmospherics continue to produce hedonic value and whether playfulness is still positive to favorable behavioral outcomes. In this research we explore the direct effects of playfulness on repurchase intentions.

Hence, we provide the following hypotheses:

H1: Cleanliness is positively associated to Playfulness
H2: Music is positively related to Playfulness
H3: Scent positively affects to Playfulness
H4: Temperature positively impacts Playfulness
H5: Lighting is positively associated to Playfulness
H6: Color is positively related to Playfulness
H7: Display/layout positively affects to Playfulness
H8: Playfulness positively impacts Repurchase Intentions

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
3. Methodology

In the current research, a computer-based self-administered survey was generated to collect data via a positivism approach. We used this method since data collection during the pandemic is restricted due to measures and social distancing. To limit error of measurement, Likert-based constructs were generated to additionally facilitate a quick and comprehensive process. Regarding the sampling process, 458 adult retail customers agreed to participate the survey during November 2021 via a snow-ball method, which resulted in a gathering of a convenience sample. Store visitors had to memorize and recall their most recent visit to a retailing physical site. 400 out of 458 store visitors had a recent experience and they properly completed the survey. Pretested scales that were used by Hussain and Ali (2015) during their past research were used to measure store atmosphere cues such as cleanliness, music, scent, temperature, lighting, display/layout, and repurchase intentions. As for playfulness, measurement was done via the adjusted scale of Mathwick et al. (2001). Regarding the sample’s demographics, 28.5% aged between 18 and 25 years old, 36.0% belonged to the age group 26-35 and 17.0% stated they aged between 36 and 45. Participants aged between 46 and 55 years old accounted for a total of 11.0%. The rest 7.5% of the participants stated they were 56 years old or older. As far as the gender of the participants was concerned, 56.4% were female and the rest 43.6% stated they were males. Regarding the analysis, SPSS V.21 helped researchers to analyze data using factor analysis, Cronbach’s alpha, and multiple regression analysis. To evaluate the measurement model, exploratory factor analysis and Cronbach’s alpha were used. Table 1 below illustrates reliability and validity of constructs. These figures were found well above minimum threshold since all the standardized factor loadings were greater than 0.70. Moreover, Cronbach’s Alpha was utilized to ensure internal validity for the research instrument.

Table 1 Reliability and validity of constructs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Original Items</th>
<th>Standardized regression weight</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cleanliness</strong></td>
<td>Hussain and Ali (2015)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL1. The cleanliness of the store floor motivates me to buy more</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL2. The clean shelves of retail chain store motivate me to stay more</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL3. The cleanliness of retail chain store attracts me to visit again</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Music</strong></td>
<td>Hussain and Ali (2015)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUS1. Listening to music creates a relaxed atmosphere while shopping</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUS2. Music in store motivates me to buy more</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUS3. Pleasant environment created by music makes me spend more time in the store</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUS4 The adequate rhythm of the background music makes me comfortable</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUS5. The adequate rhythm of the background music makes me comfortable</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUS6. The existence of background music increases my well-being and comfort</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scent</strong></td>
<td>Hussain and Ali (2015)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC1. Scent in retail chain store encourages me to purchase more</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC2. Scent in the store makes me to revisit retail chain store</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC3. Fragrance of the retail chain store makes me to stay more time</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temperature</strong></td>
<td>Hussain and Ali (2015)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMP1. The quality of the air conditioning store made my presence in the store comfortable</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMP2. Fully air-conditioned environment makes me comfortable while shopping</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMP3. Retail chain stores with no air conditioning discourage me towards shopping</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lighting</strong></td>
<td>Hussain and Ali (2015)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIGHT1. Lighting in retail chain store is fine</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIGHT2. The lighting in the store is pleasing to the eyes, and makes me to stay more</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Findings

To test all the hypothesized effects stated at the conceptual framework, regression analyses were generated. More specifically, cleanliness, music, scent, temperature, lighting, and display/layout were imported as independent variables, whereas Playfulness was the dependent variable. ANOVA of the afore-mentioned model indicated a great deal of significance (p<0.01). The research model explained the 48.0% of the total variance of playfulness. As for the direct effects of the research model, cleanliness, scent, temperature, and lighting were insignificant. Hence, these atmospheric cues have no effect on playfulness and thus, H1, H3, H4 & H5 need to be rejected. The atmospheric variables with the most prominent impact on playfulness were in descending order display/layout (β=0.33, p<0.001), music (β=0.20, p<0.001) and color (β=0.20, p<0.005). Thus, “H2: Music is positively related to Playfulness”, “H6: Color is positively related to Playfulness” and “H7: Display/layout positively affects to Playfulness”, can be accepted at a 95% confidence level. Summarizing, during the pandemic retailers need to focus on the stores’ display and not to neglect the use of music and colors as important cues improving hedonic value provided to customers. As far as the impact of the playfulness itself on
repurchase intentions, a simple regression analysis indicated a significant model. More specifically, an impressive figure of adjusted square of 0.60 revealed that playfulness alone explains the 60% of total variance of repurchase intentions. Indeed, the regression analysis indicated that playfulness is strongly and positively associated with repurchase intentions ($\beta=0.78$, $p<0.01$) and therefore “H$_8$: Playfulness positively impacts Repurchase Intentions” is accepted at a 95% confidence level. Summarizing, the hedonic customer experiential value is vital for retailers to boost repurchase intentions even during the pandemic. And to achieve so, they need to be careful on the areas of display and other atmosphere conditions such as music and color.

5. Conclusions & Discussion

In this research we unveiled the necessity of atmospherics and playfulness in terms of repurchase intentions under the light of the restrictive measures imposed during the pandemic. In specific, atmospheric variables with the most impact on playfulness were display/layout, music, and color. Regarding display, this finding is in line with the research of Mondol et al. (2021), Hussain and Ali (2015), and Gudonavičienė and Alijošienė (2015). In other words, display and layouts remain the most prominent tactics to bolster consumer experiential value during COVID-19. Concerning color, we indicated positive effects on the hedonic experiential value, a finding that is in line with Mondol et al. (2021), Gudonavičienė and Alijošienė (2015) and contrary to Hussain and Ali (2015). As for the impact of scent, our results indicated lack of importance, which is contrary to Hussain and Ali (2015) and Gudonavičienė and Alijošienė (2015). This finding indicates that scent has lost its importance during the restrictive measures of the pandemic, including wearing mask. As for the lighting and temperature, the findings of this research are in contrast with the results of Mondol et al. (2021), Hussain and Ali (2015) and Gudonavičienė and Alijošienė (2015). Hence, in pandemic scent and lighting has lost its potential. Regarding the effect of music, our findings stressed positive impact on hedonic value (i.e. playfulness) which is in contrast to Gudonavičienė and Alijošienė (2015) and Hussain and Ali (2015). Thus, it seems that during the pandemic some atmospheric cues remain strong, and some others have lost their importance. As for the impact of playfulness on repurchase intentions, playfulness was proven to be a positive vital factor of creating favorable behavioral intentions. This result is in accordance with Vilnai-Yavetz et al. (2021), Spence et al. (2014), Muhammad et al. (2014) and de Farias et al. (2014). Thus, hedonic consumer experiences remain imperative for physical retailing stores to be maintained and adjusted during the pandemic.

6. Limitations and Future Research

Product category choice was limited on garment and shoes stores that represent hedonic product categories. Perhaps, this research could be replicated to include fast moving consumer goods. In addition, Greece was the market where the survey was conducted, and hence the research is limited to the specific characteristics of the Greek culture. Therefore, this research can be replicated to countries with different aspects of culture and perceptions. As future research, we propose the investigation the moderating effects of perceived infection threat as a variable that strengthens or weakens the positive impact for various atmospheric cues.

References


Effective digital loyalty strategies in services during COVID-19 pandemic: does digital adoption matter?

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Keywords: Customer Equity Drivers, e-Consumer Behaviour, COVID-19, Services

Abstract
E-consumer Behaviour is a shifting fast as more and more consumers migrate from physical to digital stores to limit physical interaction. This research explores the effectiveness of digital loyalty strategies in services’ industry under the light of the ongoing pandemic and the respective increase in terms of Digital Adoption (DA) within the industry. In addition, this study investigates the direct effects of perceived in-store infection threat (SIT). To collect data, online self-administered survey was utilized in Greece, where 235 adult consumers participated. Findings revealed that SIT benefits Repurchase Intentions (RI) of digital services, since it exerted positive direct effects in using digital channels. Moreover, DA moderates the effectiveness of loyalty strategies. As a result, marketing strategies and practices are proposed sensitive to digital adoption or frequency of use.

Introduction
Services are facing a tremendous challenge, since the ongoing pandemic has caused significant changes in terms of consumers’ perceptions, attitudes, activities, interests and in general, this crisis has brought various shifts on Consumer Behaviour (Pollak and Konecny, 2021; Svajdova, 2021). The problem, which this study illustrates, is to address the basic variables that can be used to segment online consumers that are characterized by different incentives and means of approachability in terms of marketing practices and loyalty strategies. This study explores the effectiveness of Customer Equity Drivers (CEDs) or loyalty strategies in terms of e-channel’s Repurchase Intentions (RI) during the turbulent era of the ongoing pandemic in the services’ industry. It’s the first research to examine the moderating effects of Digital Adoption (DA) on the relationship between loyalty strategies and RI for a digital platform in services. Frequency of use and Digital Adoption (DA) are used interchangeably in this study. Last, but not least, this paper unveils the direct effects of perceived store infection threat (SIT) on a digital platform’s PI. The structure of this paper is the following: authors solidify the conceptual framework and the validity of the research method in literature review and methodology. In the findings’ section, we provide evidence using regression and moderation analysis. Conclusion and limitations are the last sections to follow.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Customer Equity Drivers
Customer Equity suggests the total sum of discounted net cash flows deriving from the firm’s customers throughout their relationship with the company and the brand (Rust et al., 2004). In general, this total value is known in marketing literature as Customer Lifetime Value whereas it depends on repurchasing the company’s branded offerings (Vogel et al., 2008). The higher the repurchase intentions, the higher the customer equity. Value Equity (VE), Brand Equity (VE), and Relationship Equity (RE) are the main antecedents of Customer Equity, also known as Loyalty Strategies or Customer Equity Drivers (CEDs).

As for Value equity, it mainly depends on the perceived sacrifice comparing to the value received (Vogel et al., 2008). Research has indicated that the ratio of the utility received to what is given by customers is essential for them to feel content and justify a purchase (Rust et al., 2004). Especially for rational purchase buying process this is of great importance and as soon as customer’s involvement with the specific service is high (Abadi et al.,
2013). Thus, it’s important for services’ marketers to provide the desired characteristics, ease of access when ordering, supplementary services (i.e., customer service and warranties) and other augmenting services (Razzaq et al., 2017).

Brand Equity on the other hand, represents the power of the brand mainly sourced by intangible and augmented product (Aaker et al, 2004). BE itself transmits signals value as well as quality cues to customers, especially to those that cannot assess it prior to consumption (Erdem et al., 2006). BE is the price premium between a branded offering and a no-name brand (Aaker et al, 2004). Thus, a service brand of similar VE is more desirable comparing to a value offering of a less strong brand hypothesizing a similar price. According to the literature review, BE is a function of brand awareness, brand associations such as brand personality and brand image and it also depends on perceived quality (Aaker et al, 2004). This is particularly important for services, since it is evidenced that limited service providers in Europe apply organized branding practices. However, this me-too practice leads to minimum differentiation and intense price competition that is hard for a smaller firm to follow. Thus, BE is an imperative loyalty strategy for every firm, regardless its size.

As far as Relationship Equity is concerned, it represents a subjunctive criterion in consumer’s decision making (Vogel et al., 2008). RE suggests the quality and quantity of relationship established between the seller and the consumer. Relationship Management and the respective campaigns such as Corporate Social Responsibility programs (CSR campaigns), communication on sustainability and green production aim to forge trust and positive emotions towards the firm and its products (Vogel et al., 2008). Especially in food services that are of high-intense competition, the quality of relationship is imperative ingredient of loyalty (Nawaz et al., 2017). Summarizing, RE can be a winning strategy for branded offerings of similar levels of BE and VE.

2.2. Effects of CEDs on Consumer Behaviour

CEDs or Loyalty Strategies drive future revenues, thus customer lifetime value and consequently, business profitability (Vogel et al., 2008). On a marketing perspective, loyalty strategies are critical in terms of favorable consumer behaviour such as customer loyalty, positive word of mouth, frequency, and amount of orders (Rust et al., 2004). According to the theory of the planned behavior, intentions precede sales and observed consumer decision-making. To forecast sales and thus, effectiveness of loyalty strategies and CEDs, marketers and practitioners are required to measure repurchase intentions (Vogel et al., 2008).

As far as consumer behaviour is concerned, this is a complex phenomenon as there is a plethora of phases both prior and post purchase (Niros et al., 2018). Purchase intention is a prominent predictor of consumer’s decision-making. In practice, both researchers and managers rely on purchase intentions scale to figure out favorable or not favorable behaviour (Ho and Chung, 2020). Thus, purchase intention concern self-guided actions to purchase a product. In services, the formulation of purchase intention is rather complex incorporating attitudes, perceptions and decisions and intervention strategies should be carefully planned by managers. Future sales suggest an outcome of brand-related attitudes and perceptions, since previous research illustrated purchase intention at the long-term outcomes favorable decision making (Vogel et al., 2008). Repurchase Intention (RI) on the other hand, reflects intentions to buy the same brand more than once (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). In general, two types of repurchase behaviours can be found; intention to repurchase is the first one whereas word-of-mouth, negative or positive is the second. This research focuses on RI related to digital distribution channels such as eCommerce websites, mobile apps, and online marketplaces.

2.3. Proposed Moderators of e-consumer behaviour

Past research has indicated e-customer behaviour to be sensitive to the adoption of ecommerce as well as the frequency of using digital platforms. Consumers indicating higher frequency of using ecommerce and digital platforms for the purchase of a service indicate differences in terms of criteria to reuse a digital brand (Molinillo et al., 2021). Highly involved consumers in general demonstrated not only better use of digital technologies, but they were also more receptive to digital campaigns such as newsletters, banners, gamification, and communication via emails and chatbots (Aldas-Manzano et al., 2011). Thus, it is expected that the frequency of using a digital place or digital adoption will moderate the positive effects of loyalty strategies on RI.

Furthermore, the pandemic has caused panic related to physical stores that brings turbulence and change in consumer behaviour (Svajdova, 2021). It is obvious that consumers started using digital sales channel more intensively comparing to the pre-pandemic era to eliminate infection risk. According to the study of Szymkowiak et al. (2021), perceived in-store infection threat (SIT) along with social distancing has made a necessity for the retailers to adjust marketing practices including the expansion of digital sales. Thus, we expect that the effectiveness of digital loyalty strategies in terms of RI will be moderated by digital adoption (DA) and furthermore, perceived SIT is expected to be positively related to RI.
Hence, we formulate the 4 hypotheses below:

H₁: SIT exerts positive direct effect on RI for services’ digital platforms
H₂: DA moderates the effectiveness of VE for services’ digital platforms
H₃: DA moderates the effectiveness of BE for services’ digital platforms
H₄: DA moderates the effectiveness of RE for services’ digital platforms

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

A computer-based self-administered survey was utilized to collect data, using a positivism approach. This method is widely used in social and business sciences, especially during the pandemic which has caused social distancing. 5-point Likert-based constructs were used to minimize error of measurement, since in self-administered surveys the completion of the questionnaire needs to be quick and to be well-understood. More specifically 467 consumers of services brands were approached in Greece between February and April 2021 via email and social media. These consumers were asked to recall their latest experience with a digital service provider. In case there was no recent experience, the process was stopped. 262 out of 467 consumers both participated and had a recent experience on services purchased on digital channels. The basic construct utilized was developed by Rust et al. (2000) and Vogel et al. (2008) and adjusted to measure BE, VE and RE of digital sales channels. As for RI, measurement was facilitated by using the adjusted scale of Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001). Frequency of use was also measured through a 5-point likert scale (1: Never, 5: Always). Concerning the analysis, SPSS V.21 helped researchers to analyze data using factor analysis, Cronbach’s alpha, multiple regression analysis as well as moderation analysis. Regarding the evaluation of measurement model, we used exploratory factor analysis and Cronbach’s alpha. Reliability and validity of constructs as Table 1 illustrates, were measured at satisfactory levels since most of standardized factor loadings were well above 0.70. In addition, to check internal validity of research constructs we used Cronbach’s Alpha (α) test.

Table 1 Reliability and validity of constructs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Original Items</th>
<th>Standaredized regression weight</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand equity</td>
<td><em>BEQ1</em>. I recognize this digital platform is a leading brand</td>
<td>0.694</td>
<td>0.775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rust et al. (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vogel et al. (2008)</td>
<td><em>BEQ2</em>. This digital platform is attractive</td>
<td>0.875</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>BEQ3</em>. This digital platform is unique</td>
<td>0.689</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>BEQ4</em>. I like this digital platform</td>
<td>0.863</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value equity</td>
<td><em>VE1</em>. This digital platform allows me to increase my use</td>
<td>0.748</td>
<td>0.810</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Findings

To support or reject hypotheses, multiple regression analysis was utilized by using RI as dependent variable. CEDs and SIT were imported as independent variables. ANOVA of the afore-mentioned model indicated a great deal of significance (p<0.01). This research model explained the 59.4% of the total variance of Repurchase Intentions. Regarding the direct effects of CEDs on the dependent variable, RE, BE, and VE exerted positive influence on RI in descending order. Thus, it seems that digital service providers may use every available possible loyalty strategy to boost RI. On the other hand, RE is the most effective loyalty strategy for it is positively related to PI (β=0.339, p<0.001) and it is followed by BE (β=0.256, p<0.001) and VE (β=0.234, p<0.001). Using perceived SIT as a control variable, we stressed that the pandemic and the resulting SIT has benefited digital service providers to attract new customers or users ordering service offerings via their platform and increasing consumers’ RI (β=0.188, p<0.01). Thus, H1 is supported a fact that illustrates the opportunity of service providers to expand their digital sales. Concerning the indirect effects of Digital Adoption (DA) or frequency of using digital platforms in services, we utilized a moderation analysis of DA in the relationship between CEDs and RI. Interaction analysis presented on Table 2 reveals that DA suggests an important moderator of e-customer behaviour. More specifically, DA in services strengthens the positive effects of value equity on RI (β=0.340, p<0.05). Thus, H2 is supported, which is a fact indicating that digital adopters are experiencing higher levels of RI comparing to consumers with lower levels of DA. On the other hand, DA attenuates the relationship between BE and RI (β=0.540, p<0.01). Thus, H3 “DA moderates the effectiveness of BE for services’ digital platforms” needs to be accepted. Regarding H4 “DA moderates the effectiveness of RE
for services’ digital platforms”, moderation analysis indicates insignificant positive effect on the relationship between RE and RI. Hence, H4 needs to be rejected. Table 2 that follows illustrates multiple regression results, along with interaction analysis.

Table 2 Results of interaction analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regression Results</th>
<th>Standardized coefficient</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Hypothesis support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BE --&gt; RI</td>
<td>0.256***</td>
<td>3.194</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VE --&gt; RI</td>
<td>0.234***</td>
<td>3.551</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE --&gt; RI</td>
<td>0.339***</td>
<td>4.142</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIT --&gt; RI</td>
<td>0.188***</td>
<td>2.155</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VE x DA --&gt; RI</td>
<td>0.340**</td>
<td>2.549</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE x DA --&gt; RI</td>
<td>-0.540***</td>
<td>-2.945</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE x DA --&gt; RI</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.834</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.001, Model significance < 0.001, Adjusted R² = 0.594

5. Conclusions & Discussion

The basic conclusions of this analysis concern the impact of the ongoing pandemic on the e-customer behavior in the service sector. The first conclusion is that service providers encounter a great deal of threat related to risks associated with perceived-instore threat. Customers fear of being infected, so they migrate to digital sales channels for their order. Hence, there is an opportunity window for service providers to grow their business in digital means. These results are aligned to the findings of Pollak and Konecny (2021) and Svajdova (2021). One further conclusion is the fact that DA and more specifically, the frequency of using digital distribution channels impacts the effectiveness of digital loyalty strategies. For instance, the effectiveness of VE is stronger for consumers with high DA, comparing to consumers with low DA. This can be attributed by the fact that customers with higher levels of DA are more receptive to value for money offerings and ease of access. In addition, customers with high levels of DA were less influenced by BE. Hence, these customers were less interested on the brand itself comparing to customers with lower levels of DA. Hence, it’s imperative for digital service providers to segment their users and customers according to frequency of using digital platforms. These findings are in accordance with the research of Aldas-Manzano et al. (2011) and Jamal et al. (2012). This is an important aspect of this paper, since digital retailers may develop customized practices according to customers’ DA. Last, but not least, this research illustrated the importance of trust and relationship in digital service markets. This is evidenced by the strong direct effects of RE on PI. The formation of strong and enduring relationships is evidenced regardless consumer’s DA. Thus, managers need to conduct CRM campaigns that are personalized to the characteristics of their customers.

6. Limitations and Future Research

Product category choice is limited on service providers and more specifically on telecommunications, food orders, insurance, and energy. Customer involvement on these products is considered to range from moderate to high and hedonic aspects are limited to most of them. In addition, Greece was the market where the survey was conducted, and hence the research is limited to the specific characteristics of the Greek culture. Therefore, this research can be replicated to countries with different aspects of culture and perceptions. As future research, we propose the investigation of digital adoption on Business-to-Business Settings, or even expand to luxury product category experiencing greater levels of customer involvement.

References


Color matters: influence of the poster color scheme on the movie choice in video-on-demand services

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Abstract:
Video-on-demand (VOD) services have become a part of everyday lifestyle. The COVID-19 pandemic has created favorable conditions for the sharp growth of the VOD industry and its transformation into a major movie distribution channel (Johnson, 2021). However, empirical evidence about movie choice in the online environment remains limited. Posters are considered one of the factors potentially influencing movie choice since they allow not only to attract attention but also to convey the film’s atmosphere (Ulker-Demirel et al., 2018). This study aims to evaluate the influence of the color scheme of a movie poster on the decision to watch a movie on VOD services. Despite notable empirical evidence for the role of color in consumer decisions (Elliot & Maier, 2012; Labrecque, Milne, 2012) this issue is still not studied in the VOD environment. The study’s methodology includes in-depth interviews (N=8) and an eye-tracking experiment (N=36) with respondents aged 18-35, which represents the most active segments of the VOD market (de Abreu et al., 2018). The eye-tracking experiment with modeling of consumer behavior was conducted on the specially created artificial VOD user interface. Posters available in this interface were divided into three equal parts: multicolor, yellow, and black posters. The respondents were also divided into three equal groups and were asked to choose no more than three films to watch on the pages of comedy and action genres, and then fill out a questionnaire. The results show that respondents create an associative row between the poster's color and genre, which influences their final decisions. Respondents were more likely to hold their gaze and gave a higher rating to black posters if the film belongs to the action genre and yellow posters if the film belongs to the comedy genre. For action movies, total duration of gaze fixations for "black" posters is 16% longer than for "color" posters, and 14% longer than for "yellow" posters. For comedy movies, total duration of gaze fixations for "yellow" posters is 19% longer than for "color" posters, and 8.5% longer than for "black" posters.

Keywords: video on demand services, movie poster, color theory, eye-tracking study, in-depth interview

References:


Service Quality perceptions of Spectators Attending a Football Game from Different Stadium Stands

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Abstract
Service quality of a sports organization is a multidimensional concept and an important element of the sports product. The purpose of this study was to research the perception that spectators have about service quality offered in a football game, who attend it from different stands of a stadium. The methodology chosen was quantitative research. The results showed that the spectators from different stands of the stadium perceive the functional service quality differently.

Keywords: Functional service quality, football spectators, stadium stands, marketing services.

Introduction
Increasing competition in professional sports leads to the development of innovative ideas, the variables of which should be carefully controlled and managed by sports managers (Kelley & Turley, 2001; Theodorakis et al., 2001), to ensure that fans enjoy their sporting experience, even when their team loses, or the game is not exciting. It has been reported that investigating on service quality and developing strategies in order to ensure spectators’ satisfaction are among the main actions that sport marketers should design to motivate spectators to attend football games (Theodorakis et al., 2013). Sport marketing theory describes the sports product with two main aspects Alexandris, (2011): (1) the core product that includes the performance of the athletes, the quality of the game, the characteristics of the team and the team valence and (2) the peripheral or supporting elements including stadium facilities, support services and the interactions between spectators and facility staff (Papadopoulos & Kargidis, 2022). This study focuses on the functional service quality under the direct control of sports marketing executives, which includes the variables "staff", "access", "security", "reliability" and "tangibles" (Theodorakis et al., 2013).

Research Purpose
The purpose of this study was to research spectators’ perception of service quality offered in a football game by those who attend it from different stadium stands.

Literature Review
Several studies have investigated the dimensions of service quality in sports organizations. With the SPORTSERV measuring instrument (Theodorakis, Kambitsis, Laios, & Koustelios, 2001), Theodorakis, Alexandris, Tsigilis & Karvounis (2013), investigated the relationship between the service quality, the satisfaction and the intentional behavior of the spectators in the Greek professional championship football and divided service quality into: a) quality of results and b) operational quality, which consists of the 5 dimensions of SPORTSERV ("tangibles", "staff", "accessibility", "security", "reliability"). With SPORTSERV, Theodorakis, Koustelios, Robinson, & Barlas (2009), explored the relationship between service quality and spectator repurchase intentions, through the role of identification, in the Greek football championship. They concluded that there is a strong relationship between the dimensions of service quality and the intention to repurchase, while the role of identification with the team is very important.
Calabuig, et al., (2010) built the EVENTQUAL (Event Quality) measuring instrument, which measures the view of spectators watching sports events about service quality offered to them. This instrument consists of 4 quality dimensions ("accessibility", "staff", "material services", "additional services"), with 22 elements - questions. The analysis showed sufficient internal consistency, reliability and validity in 14 of its 22 components. Crespo
et al., (2013) and Calabuig, et al., (2016), confirmed the dimensions of the instrument in surveys of basketball spectators in Spain. Foroughi, Anuar, Shah, Ramayah & Iranmanesh (2019), examined the impact of peripheral quality services on the emotions and behavioral intentions of football spectators in Malaysia. The authors categorized pleasant emotions into “happiness” and “excitement” and unpleasant emotions into “anxiety”, “gloom”, and “anger”. They also measured “entertainment”, “facilities”, “electronic devices”, “stadium announcer” and “behavioral intentions”. The results showed that both pleasant and unpleasant emotions significantly affect the behavior of spectators.

The main parameter of the stadiums is stands, which are usually divided into 2 general categories: the privileged and the general entrance (Kitchin & Paramario - Salcines, 2012). To attract high-income spectators and increase their income, teams incorporate various services (e.g., bars, restaurants, luxury seats, dedicated car parks, etc.) on the stadiums, which are designed to monitor of the sporting event more convenient for the spectator and offer him an unforgettable experience.

Biscaia et al (2021) examines through a meta-analysis review the consequences of functional quality. They indicated that the dimensions of functional and aesthetic quality had a moderate effect on perceived value and a small effect on both satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Core product quality showed a moderate influence on satisfaction but did influence neither perceived value nor behavioral intentions. Both perceived value and satisfaction were significantly related to behavioral intentions. Culture and sport setting partially moderated the relationships between service quality and spectator outcomes (perceived value, satisfaction and behavioral intentions towards the teams) (Biscaia et al 2021).

Van Heck et al (2021) conducted, consisting of document review, observations, and semi-structured interviews with specialists about the Johan Cruijff Arena in Amsterdam. They found nine different smart tools, which support the optimization of various processes in the stadium, such as ticketing and crowd control. They showed the potential of the smart stadium concept and how it can add value for the stadium’s stakeholders. The use of smart tools can improve effectiveness and efficiency of stadium operations, and it can be used to improve the visitors’ experience (Van Heck et al 2021).

In a study of Brochado et al (2021) identified the main narratives shared online about —and the dimensions of— visitors’ experiences with top football brands in stadium tours. The data collected for that research comprised 400 text reviews for 10 European FCs’ stadiums (i.e., 4000 reviews) written by visitors in the post-experience phase. The results confirmed the existence of 15 themes, like fan, tour, stadium, team, museum, room, staff, game, (best) place, ticket, seating, recommendation, food, shop and attraction. They concluded that Stadium tours and museum visits are important sources of revenue that contribute to FCs’ economic sustainability (Brochado et al 2021).

Finally, Yoshida et al (2021) examined spectators attending professional baseball games at two stadium contexts, in USA. Based on the results, they found that the dimensions of game-, spectator-, facility-, and organizer-induced stimuli were found to have positive effects on overall stadium atmosphere in both settings. Furthermore, the impact of overall stadium atmosphere on spectators’ conative loyalty was mediated by stadium identity. The theoretical model and results highlight the importance of stadium identity that is enhanced by stadium atmosphere and consumer satisfaction and leads to greater conative loyalty toward sport teams (Yoshida et al 2021).

Methodology

The methodology used to implement the purpose of the study was quantitative research, with the collection of primary data through a questionnaire.

Sample: 940 spectators, fans of Aris team, participated in the research, who attend the game between PAE Aris Thessaloniki and PAE Xanthi, at the "Kleanthis Vikelidis" stadium, which took place on May 5, 2019, within the framework of the Greek Championship Football (Superleague). Stratified sampling was performed, and all respondents participated voluntarily. In order for the sample of spectators to be as representative as possible of the population, the number of questionnaires distributed at each stadium stand was proportional to the number of spectators they hosted.

Measuring instrument: The model of partial mediation was used to measure the functional service quality (Theodorakis et al., 2013). It was measured in 5 dimensions: "staff" (4 items), "access" (4 items), "security" (4 items), "reliability" (4 items) and "tangibles" (4 items). A 7-point Likert scale was used.

Statistical analysis: The statistical package SPSS 20 was used for data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used. The one-way parametric analysis of one-way variance analysis was used to perform statistically significant differences. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951) was used to measure the reliability and internal consistency of factors, which yielded the following results: "tangibles" (a = 0.892), "staff responsiveness" (a = 0.965), "accessibility" (a = 0.847), "reliability" (a = 0.924) and "security" (a = 0.939).
Results
17.6% of respondents usually watch the football games from Stand 1, which is located behind the goalpost on the west side. 19.0% of respondents watch the game from Stand 2, located in the north, 33.0% from Stand 3, behind the goalpost, where attend the hard core fans of Aris, 1.6% from Stand 4, located in the southwest of the stadium, 1.3% from Stand 5, 1.2% from Stand 6, both located in the south, 13.0% from Stand 7, also in the south, 5.6% from Stand 9, located on the third level in the south and 3.8% from VIP Stand, located on the second level. Finally, 3.9% respondents attend the game from suites. Suites are designed to provide a combination of services and facilities. The stadium has 15 Suites with a capacity of 12 - 14 - 16 and 18 seats, which located on the second level on the south side. (Table 1).

From which tribune of the stadium do you usually watch the game?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stand</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stand 1</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>4.467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stand 2</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>4.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stand 3</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>7.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stand 4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stand 5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stand 6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stand 7</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>2.478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stand 9</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1.515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIP Stand</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suites</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>22.574</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Game watching stand and stadium capacity (arisfc, 2022).

The degree of perceived functional quality by the fans from the "tangibles" offered to them is of a moderate level (M = 4.31, S.D. = 1.32). Higher is the degree to which the participants in the research consider that the staff of the stadium fulfills their duties (M = 4.70, S.D. = 1.28), while the ease of accessibility to the stadium is assessed as below average. (M = 3.89, S.D. = 1.29). Relatively high reliability of the services offered was observed, with the corresponding average score of this dimension being equal to 4.61 (S.D. = 1.04), while the overall level of perceived safety of the fans inside and outside the stadium is higher. (M = 5.08, S.D. = 1.35). Overall, the level of perceived quality of the sports services offered is considered relatively satisfactory, with the average score of this factor being equal to 4.52 (S.D. = 1.04) (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangibles</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff responsiveness</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Functional service quality | 4.52 | 1.04 |

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the dimension "functional quality".

Continuing with the citation of the results that concern all the items in details on how the spectators from different stands perceive the functional service quality, it is observed in the five sub-dimensions of quality that there is quite large difference in how the fans rate the offered services. The highest score (M = 6.46) concerns the answers given by the spectators of the suites for an element of tangible services and more specifically the existence of amenities / concessions (i.e. bars, restaurants) on the field. On the contrary, the lowest score concerns (M = 2.29) the lack of parking spaces around the field and scored from the spectators who attend the game from the third level of the stadium, stand 9. Generally, the finding parking space assessed very low by all spectators, regardless the stand attending the game. It is remarkable, that the VIPs and Suites spectators’ rate very highly the services offered, while the spectators of the other stands rate them relatively lower, but the mean score does not fall below average.
Table 3: Descriptive statistics of all items, by the use of mean.

Table 4: Results of one-way variance analysis test.

Discussion - Conclusions

The results showed that the functional dimension of service quality offered to the Aris team spectators of the game, was reliable, valid and applicable. As examined in this study, functional quality is covered by the 5 dimensions of tangibles, accessibility, reliability, staff responsiveness and security. (Calabuig, et al., 2010, 2016; Crespo, et al., 2013; Foroughi, et al., 2019; Theodorakis et al., 2001, 2009, 2013). The lowest score was presented by the factor of accessibility (M.O. = 3.89), which is expected because the stadium is located in the densely populated area of Charilaou, which is located inside the urban complex, without parking spaces. The only means of public transport with which the fans can go to the stadium is the city bus. Improving services in the area of accessibility would probably also improve spectators' perception of this factor.

An important finding was that the spectators' perception of services offered to them differs depending on the stands that attend the game, with the spectators watching from the stadium suites and the VIP door scoring them higher (Suites: M.O. = 5.85 and Stand 1: M.O. = 4.20). Those results can help team marketing executives implement practices that will improve the dimensions of operational quality and help improve the spectator experience on the field. In a future study, the consequences of service quality from deferent levels of a stadium should be investigated on behavioral intentions. Other factors for further explore could be customer satisfaction and loyalty, perceived value and fan attachment in relation to service quality.
References
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Measuring the perceived quality of e-banking services

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Abstract:
The perceived service quality is well researched concept in the marketing literature. Several measurement scales have been proposed, also for banking services, but most of them are applied to physical service environment. Nowadays, especially pushed by Covid-19 situation, digitalisation of services is a new normal. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to develop and validate the perceived quality scale of e-banking services. Proposed measurement scale was tested on the convenient sample of 128 respondents from one of the major Slovenian banks using the web questionnaires. Content validity, construct validity, dimensionality and discriminant validity were assessed with EFA and CFA. The results of dimensionality, validity and reliability testing prove that the instrument is appropriate for measuring perceived quality of e-banking services. Main limitation of research is that instrument measures only perceived quality of e-banking services provided through websites and mobile phones.

Keywords: perceived quality, customer satisfaction, e-banking

Introduction
In majority of developed countries, the services contribute near 70% of country’s GDP and employs nearly 80% of its entire workforce (Malhotra et al. 2004). In most EU countries the service now account for well over 60% of total gross value added, and expenditures for services outperform expenditures for physical products (Eurostat 2021). From that point of view services marketing represents a great challenge for academic researchers. Not only globalization, increasing competition, development in technology, but also social changes and Covid-19 situation, have caused a pressure to supply side to reinvent distribution channels and offer services through all available e-channels, what is also a case in banking industry. Furthermore, today customers require more personalised banking services, and expect to access such services at any time and any place. From this point of view, e-banking services research is important for both, the customer as well as from the provider who want to satisfy the customers’ needs.

One of the basic paradigms in marketing is that perceived quality is the predecessor of customer satisfaction, so it is important that we know how to measure it. In general, the perceived quality of services is a well-researched construct (Zeithaml 1988; Parasuraman et al. 1993; Brady and Cronin 2001), and several authors have researched the perceived quality of banking services (e.g. Bahia and Nantel 2000; Lee and Hwan, 2005; Çalik and Balta, 2006; Choudhury, 2007; Shamdasani et al., 2008). In the hand with digitalisation and increasing offer of e-services, there are also authors who research the perceived quality of e-services (Parasuraman et al. 2005), but there are only a few specific studies that research the perceived quality of e-banking services (e.g. Ariff et al. 2012). The literature also shows significant differences in the adoption and use of e-banking and e-services in general in different cultural environments (e.g. Fonseca, 2014, Baptista in Oliveira, 2015).

According to the above, the main purpose and contribution of our research is the development of a measurement instrument for measuring perceived quality of e-banking services that customers access via website or mobile phone.
E-banking services and perceived service quality

Banking services have changed a lot in the last 20 years. Its development is not only the result of technological advancements but also of changes in the competitive environment and enhancing customer expectations and needs. E-banking allows clients to interact and conduct bank transactions on digital platforms and the use of it is growing. It is important to understand that e-banking services have very specific characteristics, distinguishing them from traditional banking services (Angelakopoulos and Mihiotis, 2011; Narayanasamy et al., 2011, Yoon and Steege, 2013). Due to their nature, e-banking services contribute to cutting banks’ operating costs and allow banks to add value to their services and develop better relations with their customers. It is thus important for the banks to be aware of the importance of the quality of e-banking services they provide (DeYoung et al., 2007; Ribbink et al., 2004; Rod and Ashill, 2010). They must be aware of the level of service quality and customer satisfaction, as well as understand the tools for monitoring and improving them.

Several authors have defined perceived quality, and one of the most widely used definition says that perceived quality is the gap between expectations and the actual performance (Grönroos 2000, Parasuraman et al. 1993), while Zeithaml (1988, 2000) defined it as the consumer’s judgement about a product’s superiority. It is also the result of customers’ subjective judgment of the level of the service offering and its delivery. While researchers agree that perceived service quality is a multidimensional construct, no consensus has been reached about its generally valid, generic dimensions. As researchers continue to debate the determinants of service quality a few important issues remain unanswered e.g., the universality of service quality determinants across different services (Chowdhary and Prakash 2007; Pal and Choudhury 2009) and the importance of dimensions of same service delivered across different channels.

The most frequently used scales in the measurement of perceived service quality are SERVQUAL (Parasuram, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988) and SERVPERF (Cronin and Taylor 1992). On the basis of original SERVQUAL scale, Bahia and Nantel (2000) have developed a Banking Services Quality scale. Choudhury’s (2007) study concerning the perceived service quality dimensionality in the retail banking industry suggests that customers distinguish four dimensions of service quality in the case of the retail banking industry in India; namely, attitude, competence, tangibles, and convenience. Some authors have empirically researched the quality of retail banking services in physical environment (Lee & Hwan, 2005; Çalik & Balta, 2006; Choudhury, 2007; Shamdasani et al., 2008) while are studies on perceived quality of e-banking services rare.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Malhotra (2005) define the quality of e-services as the extent to which they provide an effective performance and delivery of services to the client. Several authors have concluded that service quality in e-banking can be measured in several dimensions, e.g. the overall quality of the bank service, the quality of the e-banking system, the availability of the service, the online interface, trust, credibility and other aspects (e.g. Herington and Weaven, 2009, Jayawardhena, 2004, Rod, et. al, 2009).

Measurement instrument and content validity

In the process of reliable and valid scale development, we followed the procedure suggested by Churchill (1979) and Malhotra (2017). First, the literature review in the field has been reviewed and the initial pool of 32 items was generated. Items were partially adopted from Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Malholtra (2005), Shankar & Jебarajakirthy (2018), Ariff, Yun, Zakuan, Jusoh (2012) and partially self-generated. Likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree) was used for data collection.

In the second step items and correspondent concept definitions were reviewed by four expert judges, one professional from the banking sector, one from the field of service marketing and two from the field of marketing research. Additionally, the scales were checked by ten potential respondents (users of e-banking services) for potential understanding problems and redundancy. After content validity testing we were left with the pool of 30 items.

Sample selection and description

Data were collected on the convenient sample of 128 respondents from one of the major Slovenian banks using the web questionnaires. The majority of respondents were woman (78%). 28% were aged between 30 and 40 years and the same percentage was older than 51 years. The majority of respondents (82%) were employed at the time of data collection.

Dimensionality and construct validity

Dimensionality and construct validity were tested with exploratory (EFA) and confirmatory (CFA) factor analysis with SPSS 27.0 and AMOS 27.0 software.
First the EFA with principal components method and varimax rotation was deployed and the e-banking quality construct resulted in 5 factors. Five items from the initial 30 were eliminated due to inappropriate loadings. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's measure (KMO=.893) for the final solution showed that the data were appropriate for the factor analysis. Bartlett's sphericity test was statistically significant at p<0.05. Three factors together explained 70.90 % of the total variance of all items and communalities were higher than 0.4. Factor loadings with the exception of two items on their corresponding factor exceeded the cut off value of 0.6 and were lower than 0.46 on other factors. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were well above 0.6, showing the appropriate level of reliability.

In the second phase CFA was deployed. In the first model all items were loaded on a single construct which resulted in an inadequate model fit. Then the items were loaded on five constructs. Five factor model proved to be significantly better then a single construct model. After six items were removed the model showed appropriate fit, which was evaluated in line with the representative authors in the field (MacCallum et al, 1996; Hu and Bentler, 1999; Byrne, 1994). Besides \( \chi^2 \) which was significant (\( \chi^2=226,309, \text{df}= 142 \)), the following thresholds for fit indices were used to evaluate model fit: RMSEA<.08, CFI>.90, TLI>.90, IFI>.90. All fit indices were close or above the suggested thresholds: RMSEA=0,068; NFI=0,889; IFI=0,956; TLI=0,946; CFI=0,955; RMR=0,026

All factor loadings were significant (p < 0.05), loaded positively and on their intended latent variable and were higher than .6. Composite reliability was good and, in all cases, higher than .6 and average variance extracted were all near or above the suggested threshold of .5. The data confirm the convergent validity of used constructs.

Discriminant validity was tested using the HTMT matrix (Henseler et al., 2015). All ratios of correlation between latent were lower than the suggested threshold of .85 (table 2). Additional Fornell and Larcker (1981) test that was implemented show the discriminant validity of the scale.

| Table 1: Indicators means, standard deviations, loadings, latent variables composite reliabilities and average variances extracted |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------|---------|-------|-------|
| The e-banking site is easy to use.              | Mean  | St. D.  | Estimate | CR    | AVE    |
| This e-banking site enables me to get on to it quickly. | 4,27  | 0,649   | 0,940   | 0,895 | 0,637  |
| E-banking efficiency                            |       |         |         |       |        |
| This e-banking site enables me to get on to it quickly. | 4,41  | 0,582   | 0,808   |       |        |
| It makes it easy to get anywhere on this e-banking site. | 4,34  | 0,669   | 0,837   |       |        |
| Information at this e-banking site is well organized | 4,23  | 0,667   | 0,800   |       |        |
| This e-banking site enables me to complete a transaction quickly. | 4,48  | 0,652   | 0,556   |       |        |
| E-banking service fulfilment                    |       |         |         |       |        |
| It is truthful about its offerings.             | 3,96  | 0,778   | 0,877   | 0,868 | 0,627  |
| This e-banking site makes accurate promises about the services being delivered. | 3,95  | 0,719   | 0,882   |       |        |
| The e-banking site is updated regularly.       | 4,17  | 0,722   | 0,562   |       |        |
| This e-banking site takes care of problems promptly. | 3,93  | 0,795   | 0,804   |       |        |
| Pages at this e-banking site do not freeze after I enter the required information. | 4,05  | 0,850   | 0,823   | 0,868 | 0,625  |
| E-banking system stability                     |       |         |         |       |        |
| This e-banking site does not crash.             | 3,90  | 0,954   | 0,851   |       |        |
| This e-banking site launches and runs right away. | 4,26  | 0,713   | 0,814   |       |        |
| This e-banking site makes services available within a suitable time frame. | 4,41  | 0,581   | 0,659   |       |        |
| E-banking security                             |       |         |         |       |        |
| My financial information is protected on this e-banking site. | 4,12  | 0,694   | 0,982   | 0,976 | 0,930  |
My personal information is protected on this e-banking site. | 4.12 | 0.738 | 0.957 |
The transactions over this e-banking site are secured. | 4.13 | 0.714 | 0.954 |
This e-banking site provides a telephone number to reach the company. | 4.29 | 0.744 | 0.617 | 0.733 | 0.480 |
This e-banking site quickly resolves online transaction problems. | 3.91 | 0.774 | 0.785 |
This e-banking site offers the ability to speak to a live person if there is a problem. | 3.71 | 0.940 | 0.665 |

\[ X^2=226.309 \ (142), \ RMSEA=0.068; \ NFI=0.889; \ IFI=0.956; \ TLI=0.946; \ CFI=0.955; \ RMR=0.026 \]

All factor loadings were significant (p < 0.05), loaded positively and on their intended latent variable and were higher than .6. Composite reliability was good and, in all cases, higher than .6 and average variance extracted were all near or above the suggested threshold of .5. The data confirm the convergent validity of used constructs.

Discriminant validity was tested using the HTMT matrix (Henseler et al., 2015). All ratios of correlation between latent were lower than the suggested threshold of .85 (table 2). Additional Fornell and Larcker (1981) test that was implemented show the discriminant validity of the scale.

**Table 2: HTMT ratio of correlations**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.609</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>0.609</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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**Discussion**
The results of the measurement model indicated in table 1 and 2 indicate that the e-banking service quality construct exhibits the adequate content and construct validity and can be explained with five subconstructs.

First factor was named e-banking efficiency, since the items measure the ease of use, speed, and organization of the e-banking service. The second reflects the accurate promises about the services, update capacity and problem resolution, therefore we named it fulfilment. The third factor is measuring system stability since the items measure stability of the system, the speed of launching the site and the availability of the e-banking services. Last two factors were named e-banking security and e-banking support, security measuring protection of financial and personal information and transaction security, and support measuring the possibility of making personal contact with the bank and personal resolution of potential problems.

**Conclusions**
This paper represents an attempt to contribute to the research of contemporary banking services in the e-environment, particularly web and mobile-banking. The e-banking services has developed intensively in the past period and is still in progress. However, rapid development was not followed by research at the same pace, largely because the research tools development has failed to follow the fast technological and distributional changes.

The development of a measuring instrument for perceived quality of e-banking services was therefore a logical choice for closing the knowledge gap between perceived quality of e-services, banking services and rare and incomplete studies of e-banking services. The developed instrument for (M)easuring (P)erceived (Q)uality of (e)-(B)anking (S)ervices (MPQe-BS) is an original, holistic, robust proposal for measuring perceived quality of e-banking services in web and mobile context.
The advantages of the MPQe-BS are its compact multidimensional structure and ease of use. MPQe-BS contains 19 items with which it is possible to determine the perceived quality of e-banking services on 5 key dimensions of e-banking site quality, namely E-banking efficiency, E-banking service fulfilment, E-banking system stability, E-banking security, and E-banking support. The relatively small number of items means less workload for the respondent, who on average needs 2-3 minutes to respond on the items. This means that the motivation to participate during the fulfilment period does not decrease, which in turn means higher reliability of the collected data.

MPQe-BS is non-specific concerning the cultural context, which gives us the possibility of wide use in different cultures and consequently means the possibility of comparative research. Except for academic purposes, MPQe-BS is useful for banks that want to determine the perceived quality of their e-banking services.

Regardless of the benefits, also the limitation should be acknowledged, relating to the instrument's focus only on perceived quality of e-banking services providing through websites and mobile apps and not considering other possible distribution channels.

References:


Public Rehabilitation Services in Greece. Which Factors Affect Scientific Employees & Attitude Towards Organizational Changes?

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**Purpose of the paper:** The current study examines the factors affecting scientific employees of public rehabilitation services, organizational change.

**Research methodology:** After literature review, we found several definitions of the term Organizational Change in the international literature (Steinke et al, 2013 and Kim and Chung 2017). The term Organizational Change is defined either based on the organizational perspective of the management strategy or based on the perspective of organizational development. These two perspectives are the most important in the literature regarding Organizational Change. Bryson et al in 2018 considered that the term Organizational Change is based on the organizational perspective of management strategy as a process of implementing the corporate strategy of the organization by executives. Preparedness for change was better predicted by combining individual with organizational factors as Stuten et al. in 2018 stated after a study for an annual redesign program at a large Canadian teaching hospital. He found that employees who participated in more active work had higher levels of readiness for change. Individual factors that were found to significantly affect readiness for change included a more proactive approach to problem solving and greater feelings of self-efficacy.

Taking these data under consideration, we then collected 129 valid questionnaires completed by scientific employees from a public hospital, providing rehabilitation services, during a six-month period in 2019.

**Findings:** Change-Related Self-Efficacy factor has a direct effect on factor “benefits of the organization”. Change-Related Self-Efficacy factor has a direct effect on taking part in the organization change process. Factor of “being informed” has a direct effect both on “Change-Related Self-Efficacy” and on factor “benefits of the organization”. Factor of “being informed” has a direct effect on “taking part in the organization change process”. “Taking part in the organization change process” has a direct effect on factor “benefits of the organization”.

**Conclusions:** Several individual and organizational factors affect the scientific employees’ attitude towards organizational change in public rehabilitation services.

**Research limitations:** One limitation of our study is the relatively small number of participants, however the population of scientific employees of public rehabilitation services is small. Although we tested for nonresponse bias and found no evidence, the possibility cannot be completely ruled out.

**Discussion-practical implications:** The organizational changes can only be successful when taking under consideration on the change of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the organization’s members. As a suggestion, organizations can promote internal events to publicize the stages of the process of change and improve exchanging of ideas and transparency of the process of change, which promotes positive attitudes and encourages engagement with the suggested process of change. The negative aspects of organizational change evaluation can be reduced if employees are well informed.

**Originality/What is new about your research:** The originality of this study is the implementation of this questionnaire to scientific employees of a public hospital providing rehabilitation services, trying to figure out how Organizational Change can be done in an effective way and which factors affect scientists’ attitude toward this change.
Type and emotional tone in negative TripAdvisor reviews: The case of Museums

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Abstract  
The recent developments in the online environment and the proliferation of digital communication have significantly affected the museum sector. The present study uses a content analysis approach to discuss negative comments from a travel review platform combined with the emotions expressed by visitors. The analysis is based on the negative reviews from visitors in the 10 largest Greek museums in Athens and Thessaloniki registered on TripAdvisor. Our findings underline that collection management, poor staff behaviour, lack of exhibition interpretation and interest, as well as unexpected closure are the most frequent types of complaints. Sadness, contempt, and anger are the three prevailing emotions. Sadness is elicited in response to unexpected closures and fees, contempt in response to museum collection management failures and a lack of interest, and anger in response to visitor complaints about the staff.

Keywords: museum, negative reviews, emotions, TripAdvisor, service failure

Introduction  
The recent digital revolution has created significant challenges for tourism, and in particular the museum sector (Alexander, Blank, and Hale 2018). There is a proliferation of travel review websites (Taearcharungroj, Mathayomchan 2019), with valuable feedback for attractions, hotels, restaurants, and museums. Among them, TripAdvisor is considered the most well-known online review platform in the tourism sector (Sua, and Teng 2018) with 463 million people logging in the official website every month (TripAdvisor 2021) to plan their journey (Antón, Camarero, and Garrido, 2018). TripAdvisor provides users with a list of reviews from 1020 museums across the globe (TripAdvisor 2021). Online reviews generated by users (UGC), reflect visitors’ estimations, describe their experience, and express their emotions (Taearcharungroj, Mathayomchan 2019). Alexander, Blank, and Hale (2018) in their analysis of the frequent topics in comments from TripAdvisor underline that visitor observe all characteristics and details of their museum experience; staff, service, restaurant, cost, queues, and activities for children. Several studies further indicate that online reviews significantly affect traveler behavior and trust toward the website and the destination (Ayeh, Au, and Law 2014; Antón, Camarero and Garrido 2018). Focusing on visitor dissatisfaction Sú and Tend (2018), classified the negative reviews in TripAdvisor providing significant insight the recognition and recovery of museum service failures.

The present study uses a content analysis approach to discuss negative comments from a travel review platform (TripAdvisor) alongside the emotions expressed by museum visitors based on the negative reviews from visitors in the 10 largest Greek museums in Athens and Thessaloniki registered on TripAdvisor. This to the best of our knowledge is the first study to analyze visitor complaints vis-à-vis their emotions about museum service failures. The findings provide significant insight to museum professionals, wishing to understand the motivations and desires of their visitors. Museum professionals can use specific extrinsic emotion regulation strategies to alter visitors' negative emotions and reviews and pursue service recovery with precision.

Literature Review  
The museums of the 21st century, making thorough reforms, focus on visitor experience and satisfaction (Rentzschler and Hede 2007). Research scholars have highlighted the significance of market knowledge for museums to meet their goals and strategy (Kotler and Kotler 2010; Colbert 2001; Kotler 1972). Museums and heritage organizations use marketing tools to expand their audience, improve museums’ experience, increase sales, collect sponsorships, and develop cultural activities and educational programs, creative workshops, celebrations, and performances (Black 2005; Rojas and Camarero 2008; Gallagher and Weiberg 1991).
However, museum experience begins long before the visit, starting from the destination search (Falk and Dierking 2016) and the review of online consumer communication (Tirumalai and Tellis 2014). Prior research strongly advocates that user-generated content, is vitally important for both museum professionals, and potential visitors (Filieri et al. 2015; Sú and Teng 2018; Taecharungroj and Mathayomchan 2019; Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan 2007).

Along these lines, Frochot and Hughes (2000) claim that TripAdvisor's comments are principal marketing tools. Implementing a data assurance policy (Taecharungroj and Mathayomchan 2019), TripAdvisor echoes visitor pleasure and satisfaction, helps museum professionals to determine assets and downsides (Banerjee and Chua 2016) and contributes to museum image and reputation (Taecharungroj and Mathayomchan 2019), influencing the decisions of potential visitors (Zhang et al. 2010) who seek information to reflect the authentic experience (Guo et al. 2017).

Yet not all messages seem to have the same effect on readers (Lee, Park, and Han 2008). Despite their multiplicity, positive ratings have less impact than the negative ones (Chen and Lurie 2013), which are considered more reliable and attract readers’ attention. Negative word of mouth is the most common behavior following dissatisfaction from service failure (Alexander, Blank, and Hale 2018). Although negative online reviews could discourage potential visitors and negatively affect museum reputation, they are significant to identify and measure service failures (Papathanassiis and Knolle 2011; Dellarocas 2003), improve service quality and adapt to customer needs (Alexander, Blank, and Hale 2018).

A thorough analysis of 301 negative reviews from 15 museums worldwide (Sú and Teng, 2018) led to the identification of diverse but distinct fail points and the associated type of complaints ranging from Entrance queue, Crowded, Staff, Collection, and Interest, to Unannounced closure, Exhibition maintenance, Museum Mission and Parking (Table 1). The above typology provides the basis for the present study.

| Table 1 near here |

As the museum experience outlasts the visit, consumers recall not only the buildings and exhibitions but also the emotions they felt (Cunnell and Prentice 2000). Negative visitor emotions are often expressed (Zeelenberga and Pieters 2004) through online reviews. Taking into consideration that consumer dissatisfaction reduces patronage and profitability (Zeelenberga and Pieters 2004), focuses on the identification of types of complaints and the associated emotions to provide an effective guide for tourism professionals and addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the percentage of each type of complaint on TripAdvisor comments about Greek museums?
2. What emotion is associated with each type of complaint on TripAdvisor comments about Greek museums?

Methodology

A content analysis of negative comments on TripAdvisor was conducted to investigate visitor complaints and the associated emotions expressed in their reviews as evidence of museums’ service failures. A diversity of ten large, known museums in Athens and Thessaloniki (Greece), listed on TripAdvisor were selected (Table 2).

| Table 2 near here |

Reviews for all above museums range from one to five stars corresponding to terrible, poor, average, very good, and excellent rating. All negative reviews, with one and two stars (terrible and poor), were collected for the study resulting in 592 negative comments that were categorized according to Sú and Teng (2018) typology. Visitor emotions: joy, anger, fear, sadness, contempt, surprise, disgust, and neutral emotion (Izard 1992) were also recorded. Out of the 592 reviews, 10 were positive, and 5 were irrelevant, resulting in 577 usable negative reviews.

Findings

Table 3 illustrates visitor complaints on TripAdvisor and the emotions expressed by their reviews as evidence of museums’ service failures. The most common service failure expressed by visitors refer to museum collections (40%, 231 reviews) (Table 3) and specifically limited exhibits, empty showcases and poorly exposed collection. Poor staff behaviour and very rude customer service were also addressed by a considerable number of visitors (26.5%, 153 reviews), followed by complaints about lack in exhibit interpretation (19.7%, 114 reviews). The fourth and fifth most common service failures reported relate to lack of interest (15.2%, 88 reviews) and unannounced closure (12.3%, 71 reviews).

| Table 3 near here |

Table 3 also sums up the emotions expressed alongside each complaint. Sadness is the prevailing emotion expressed by visitors through several types of negative TripAdvisor reviews (43.3%, 250 reviews), followed by contempt for the museum’s services failure (28.4%, 164 reviews). Several negative reviews also reflected anger (11.8%, 68 reviews). The results indicate statistically significant differences in the emotional dimension of each type of complaint (Table 3).
A remarkable number of visitors (80%) complaining about the curation display express sadness compared to other service failures (42.7%) (X²=5.6, Cramer’s V = .098, p<.05) whereas several museum tourists displeased with unannounced closures expressed sadness (59.2%) more than in other types of complaints (41.1%) (X²=8.3, Cramer’s V = .120, p<.01). Sadness is also significantly manifested when they are annoyed by admission or unexpected fees (56.7%) compared to other negative reviews (41.6%) (X²=5.5, Cramer’s V = .098, p<.05). Visitors are more likely to express anger when they complain about the staff (26.8%) rather than any other service failure (6.4%) (X²=45.14, Cramer’s V = .280, p<.001) whereas they seem to considerably express contempt when they are displeased with the lack of interest (51.1%) rather than any other poor performance (24.3%) (X²=26.3, Cramer’s V = .214, p<.001). Finally, tourists tend to also manifest contempt when complaining about the museum collection management, (37.7%) rather than other unsuccessful service offering (22.3%) (X²=16.2, Cramer’s V = .167, p<.001).

Conclusions and discussion
Unsuccessful performance on customer services was found to cause visitors negative emotions expressed through complaints on the TripAdvisor. The results indicate that collection management, poor staff behaviour, lack of exhibit interpretation, lack of interest, and unannounced closure are the most frequent types of complaints, whereas sadness, contempt, and anger are the three prevailing emotions. Our findings partly contradict Süt and Teng (2018) who conclude that the most frequent reasons for poor reviews are long queues and overcrowding. However, following the two prevailing reasons, they report lack of interest, disappointment with the museum collection, staff rude attitude and unexpected closure of museum or exhibition, that are along the line of this study’s findings.
Based on Roseman’s Cognitive Appraisal Theory (1996), emotions are extracted by people’s evaluations of events and situations, whereas negative emotions are elicited by events estimated as inconsistent with the individual’s motivations. As indicated by our findings, sadness prevails compared to other emotions and is strongly associated with unannounced closure, poor curation display and unexpected fees. Consumers experience sadness when something they desired was inferior to their expectations and has ended without the possibility of being recovered (Roseman, 1996). They do not attribute responsibility to another person or the organization and they tend to feel sad about the missed opportunity or the disheartening experience. Our results associate sadness with unexpected closure, unexpected fees experiences that have concluded without the possibility of recovery, leaving a gloomy memory.
Our results also indicate that contempt is elicited as a response to the museum collection management failures and a lack of interest. Contempt is considered a distinctive emotion and recognizable facial expression associated with consumers’ conclusion that the failed event/product/service and the associated organization are not worthy of their time and effort (Roseman, 1996). When a service performance is negatively evaluated and consumers feel that the organization failed them, they lose interest and experience contempt. Our findings indicate that when visitors consider an exhibition is not interesting or is poorly managed, they lose interest and express contempt.
Poor customer services though often result in angry consumers. Anger is experienced when museum visitors attribute responsibility for the poor customer service to museum staff. Their dissatisfaction with staff performance takes form in the negative comments about employee behavior and competence to voice their anger. Moving along the lines of prior studies suggesting that anger is experienced when a negative event is provoked by other people’s action (Roseman, 1996) our findings strongly associate anger with employee bad behaviour.
Considering museums’ efforts worldwide to expand their audience and collect sponsorships, positive users generated comments can be an asset to their brand image and reputation. Negative comments though, related to inconsistent services and poor performance are a threat to museums’ viability as the negative emotions (i.e., anger, sadness, contempt) expressed can alienate potential visitors and reduce patronage. Museums should try to study the motives, desires, and needs of visitors and adapt to their extroverted cultural activities.
Most importantly though, museums need to prevent the negative emotions often expressed by visitors. To address sadness, they should review their operations with respect to customer expectations and develop the processes to forecast and amend unexpected occurrences thus reducing visitor disappointment. Reforms into permanent exhibitions and more appealing presentation of the exhibits could also be the answer to expressed contempt. Yet to address anger museums need to invest in personnel implementing extensive training programs and motivation techniques.
Furthermore, museum professionals can employ specific extrinsic emotion regulation strategies (Nozaki and Mikolajczak 2020) to regulate visitors’ negative emotions and reviews, as well as pursue service recovery with precision. For instance, they can use distraction (e.g., by offering discounts to visit the museum another day) to regulate visitors’ sadness due to an unexpected closure, reappraisal (e.g., by attempting to persuade visitors of the archaeological value of the collection) to regulate visitors’ contempt for the collection, or problem-solving.
(e.g., by implementing better recruitment and training techniques) to regulate visitors' anger towards staff poor behavior.

**Limitation and future research**

As often expressed, this study is not without limitation. It is context and place specific. Apart from the fact that it addresses only one area of tourism services, that of museums, it also focuses on Greek museums. For a more all-embracing and comprehensive view, future research should embrace museums from around the globe. Additionally, this study takes a descriptive approach and does not explain how specific emotions can change. Therefore, future research should focus on the mechanisms that can improve these emotions.

**References**


### Tables

#### Table 1. Classification of negative reviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collection</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Exhibition Interpretation</th>
<th>Unannounced closure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crowded</td>
<td>Response to complaints</td>
<td>Etiquette</td>
<td>Museum Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curation/Display</td>
<td>Flow</td>
<td>Hands-on</td>
<td>Parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercialized</td>
<td>Admissions/ Unexpected fees</td>
<td>Electronic/Audio Guide</td>
<td>Multilingual</td>
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<td>Entrance Queue</td>
<td>Disabled/Elder/Children</td>
<td>Coat/bag checking</td>
<td>Proximity</td>
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<td>Interest</td>
<td>Wi-Fi/Elevator/Drinking fountains/Seats</td>
<td>Restaurant/Food</td>
<td>Exhibition Maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation/Signage</td>
<td>Photography/Selfie</td>
<td>Bathroom</td>
<td>Map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening time</td>
<td>Refund policy/On-line ticketing/Advanced ticket</td>
<td>Temperature/Smell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

#### Table 2. Selected Museums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athens</th>
<th>Thessaloniki</th>
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<tr>
<td>Acropolis Museum</td>
<td>Archaeological Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benaki Museum</td>
<td>Museum of Byzantine Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byzantine and Christian Museum</td>
<td>Museum of the Macedonian Struggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Archaeological Museum</td>
<td>War Museum Thessaloniki</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Historical Museum</td>
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<td>War Museum</td>
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Table 3. Findings

<table>
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<th>Anger % (N)</th>
<th>Contempt % (N)</th>
<th>Disgust % (N)</th>
<th>Fear % (N)</th>
<th>Neutral % (N)</th>
<th>Sadness % (N)</th>
<th>Surprise % (N)</th>
<th>Total % (N)</th>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>&gt;16.3*** (25 1)</td>
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<td>&gt;9.2*** (14)</td>
<td>&gt;5.2* (8)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8.2 (19)</td>
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<td>100 (3)</td>
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<td>Count</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coat/ Bag checking</td>
<td>25(4)</td>
<td>100(16)</td>
<td>18.8(3)</td>
<td>100(16)</td>
<td>6.3(1)</td>
<td>100(16)</td>
<td>&lt;18.8*(3)</td>
<td>100(16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilingual</td>
<td>7(3)</td>
<td>100(43)</td>
<td>27.9(12)</td>
<td>100(43)</td>
<td>7(3)</td>
<td>100(43)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100(43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity</td>
<td>8.3(1)</td>
<td>100(12)</td>
<td>16.7(2)</td>
<td>100(12)</td>
<td>&lt;16.7*(2)</td>
<td>100(12)</td>
<td>16.7(2)</td>
<td>100(12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No photography</td>
<td>19(11)</td>
<td>100(58)</td>
<td>27.6(16)</td>
<td>100(58)</td>
<td>1.7(1)</td>
<td>100(58)</td>
<td>&lt;12.1**(7)</td>
<td>100(58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands on</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100(12)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100(12)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100(12)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100(12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibitions Maintenance</td>
<td>13.9(5)</td>
<td>100(36)</td>
<td>33.3(12)</td>
<td>100(36)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100(36)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100(36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum mission</td>
<td>50(1)</td>
<td>100(2)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100(2)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100(2)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100(1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100(1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100(1)</td>
<td>&lt;100*(1)</td>
<td>100(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total % (N)</td>
<td>100(68)</td>
<td>100(164)</td>
<td>100(15)</td>
<td>100(164)</td>
<td>100(18)</td>
<td>100(164)</td>
<td>100(60)</td>
<td>100(164)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001
Social, Environmental and Societal Marketing
Green chemical ingredients in personal and home care products

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Keywords: Green business practices, carbon capture and utilisation (CCU), green oxo-products, CPGs industry

INTRODUCTION
Industry, among all other society stakeholders, faces challenges toward carbon neutrality until 2050, as agreed in the UN Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero in 2021 (GFANZ, 2022). Corporate strategies must be implemented towards honest - not greenwash (Nguyen et al. 2019) - sustainable business missions (Rudawska, 2019). An honest ecological business strategy has to include goals, such as reducing emissions, energy, water and waste (Abutaleb and El-Bassiouny, 2020).

Among other manufacturing sectors, the chemical industry is often accused of harming the physical environment heavily (DECHEMA, 2017). The chemical industry has been found to be the third-largest Green House Gas (GHG) emitter in Europe (DECHEMA, 2017). Hence, research efforts in several industrial sectors are required to benefit from the European Green Deal regarding climate change and the reduction of carbon gas emissions (EC, 2019). Focusing on the production of Consumer-Packaged Goods (CPGs), the concept of ecologically friendlier, green raw materials and ingredients has been gaining importance over time (Duran et al., 2014; AISE, 2022; Cosmetics Europe, 2022). Nonetheless, it is to be acknowledged that the factors that are able to motivate the actual adoption and implementation of green, innovative practices by the European CPGs industries are still mostly in the shadow (Seuring and Gold, 2013; Scur and Barbosa, 2017; Jones et al., 2017). In fact, currently, solely 13% of industries are actually engaged in carbon capture, utilisation and storage / CCUS of the CO₂ exhausts in chemical manufacturing (Euromonitor International, 2022).

This study focused on a technologically innovative process through which three oxo-products will be produced by recycled CO₂, water and sunlight. These are the Glycolic Acid used in personal care products, n-Valeraldehyde used in plastic and flavouring and the Limoxal™ used in the production of fragrances in personal care and household cleaning products. Hence, the topic of this study concerns mainly carbon capture and utilisation/ CCU (Linzienich et al., 2019), also referred to as Carbon Dioxide Utilization (CDU) (Jones et al., 2014; 2015) or CO₂ Recycling (Perathoner and Centi, 2014).

Therefore, this paper presents parts of an exploratory, mix-methodology study, in which experts with European CPGs industries were surveyed in order to express their overall perceptions towards sustainability and green technological innovation as well as to state their willingness and prerequisites to adopting new, green chemical oxo-products containing recycled CO₂ in the production of their own CPGs.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE
It's been a while since the chemical industry has been challenged to drastically reduce carbon gas emissions to comply with the European strategy about climate change (EC 2037 2000; EC 1005 2009). Indeed, the greenhouse gas emissions of the EU chemical industry were decoupled, as in 2019, they fell by nearly 54% since 1990 (CEFIC, 2022). However, it is to be noted that the above-mentioned reduction was actually achieved mainly in the period 1997-2013, while after 2013, there were no significant reductions in GHG emissions (CEFIC, 2022).

In this sense, technological initiatives concerning reducing carbon gas emissions in the production of products and/or by-products or ingredients in CPGs synthesis can be considered valuable. In this study, two main CPGs categories, namely the household and the personal care products (fragrances, cosmetics and other toiletries), have been put under examination. The market value for household cleaning products in the EU accounted for
€32.4 billion in 2020, increasing by 4.7% from €30.2 billion in 2019 (AISE, 2021). A significant increase is expected in the household cleaning products due to COVID-19 (Statista, 2022a).

The market values for personal care products in the EU accounted for €76.7 billion and in EU27 for €63.8 billion (Cosmetics Europe, 2020). These figures represent approximately €10 billion growth between 2015 and 2020 (Statista, 2022). Overall it is expected that in the decade to come, the European share will decrease, although the global market is going to experience an increase; China, NAFTA and Latin America are expected to enlarge their shares (CEFIC, 2022). This situation is customarily appointed to the energy and total cost in Europe, which, however, remains, of course, the greater power in terms of product quality and innovation.

Green practices in the CPGs Industry

In the Euromonitor International (2022), it was very recently reported that just 13% of the businesses actually have a carbon Net-Zero strategy. However, more than 70% of the business executives stated that climate change is an extremely important issue to be taken care of immediately while more specifically 43.3% of them expect that reduced carbon footprint will be one of the major consumer concerns in the future (Euromonitor International, 2021). It is to be noted, though, that the large European companies (>500 employees) have to submit to the EU detailed reports about the pro-environmental interventions in infrastructure and production in their factories, whereas the details in these mandatory reports are getting stricter over time (EC 95, 2014).

Efforts to respond to the European regulations and consumers’ concerns are increasing in the home and personal care sectors. Home care products corporates move towards innovative services and products by adopting innovations in materials and surfaces (AISE, 2022). The personal care products industry also turns towards engagement in green practices such as the use of biodegradable, recyclable and reusable packaging as well as eco-design of formulas with more sustainable materials to minimize the environmental footprint of their final products (Cosmetics Europe, 2022).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research study are:
- to record the innovative, green practices that are already implemented or planned to be implemented shortly, in the production process of the CPGs industries
- to examine the experts’ perceptions about innovation and sustainability
- to explore the executives’ willingness to adopt and the prerequisites to include into the production of their own CPGs the new, green oxo-products and valorise them in their promotional mix

METHODOLOGY

A mixed methodological technique to collect empirical data was utilised following Kapitan et al. (2019), Abutaleb and El Bassiouny (2020) and Cox et al. (2020). A semi-structured inventory was designed through a long development procedure that included pilot, pre-testing as well as a series of re-editing techniques (Mason, 2009). The final research instrument included 3 questions about business and experts’ characteristics. There were 9 quantitative questions, some of which contained an open part, too. There were also 8 totally open questions prepared for each interview.

Judgement or purposive sampling (Churchill and Iacobucci, 2005; Zikmund, 2003) with one expert of each firm taking part in face to face, though online, in-depth interview. As for the sample size, a tool of 60 CPGs industries was prepared based on the criterion of diversity (Duran et al., 2014) concerning the size. The data collection procedure ended in 13 useable cases; a sample size that is considered large enough in a mixed methodology study (Patton, 2002).

RESULTS

The quantitative part of the inventory provided the following results:

In Table 1, business and respondents’ characteristics are reported together with the product categories produced in each firm (CPGs). The synthesis of the main ingredients (In) per product category is also presented. In almost all cases (11), basically chemically produced (synthetic) ingredients are used while some natural and/or organic ingredients are utilised.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Companies</th>
<th>Legal form</th>
<th>Number of employees</th>
<th>Respondent Specialty</th>
<th>CPGs</th>
<th>Ingredients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company 1</td>
<td>S.A.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Chemist</td>
<td>Fabric &amp; Home care</td>
<td>√  √</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company 2</td>
<td>S.A.</td>
<td>&gt;1,000</td>
<td>Business Dev.</td>
<td>Fabric, Home &amp; Personal care</td>
<td>√  √</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company 3</td>
<td>S.A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>CPGs Director</td>
<td>Fabric, Home &amp; Personal care</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company 4</td>
<td>S.A.</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>Procurement Mngt</td>
<td>Cosmetics &amp; Fragrances</td>
<td>√  √  √</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company 5</td>
<td>S.A.</td>
<td>&gt;100,000</td>
<td>Biotechnology</td>
<td>Fabric, Home &amp; Personal care</td>
<td>√  √  √</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company 6</td>
<td>S.A.</td>
<td>22-40</td>
<td>Chemical Engineer</td>
<td>Fragrances &amp; Personal care</td>
<td>√  √</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With regards to the innovation strategy (IS), it was found that 8 out of 13 experts declared that they develop new and also adopt existing innovations in their production process, 3 of them reported imitation of leaders, and 2 reported progressive development of existing techniques. As for the most important aspects when considering innovative, green practices (IGPA) in the production of CPGs, 8 of the respondents expressed that “renewable materials” is the main issue, 9 “carbon neutral production processes”, while 5 of them stated that “biodegradable products” is the most important aspect.

With regards to the European Green Deal actions (GDA) in Table 2, 10 out of 13 industries declared that they have already carried out “recycling technologies”, 7 “reduction of water and energy technologies”, 6 “replacing part of the materials with green substitutes”, 5 “moving towards renewable materials” and “waste management technologies”, 4 “avoidance of materials tested on animals”, “moving towards biodegradable products”, “reduction of CO₂ emissions” and “sustainable packaging” while just 3 out of 13 declared that they already follow an “environmental management system” and “replace part of fossil fuels with renewable sources”. There have been 4 companies which plan to adopt the latter two actions in the future.

### Table 2: Green Deal Actions (GDA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Already</th>
<th>In the Future</th>
<th>No response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n %</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance of materials tested on animal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental management systems</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving towards biodegradable products</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>69.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving towards renewable materials</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycling technologies</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of water and energy technologies</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of CO₂ emissions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacing part of the materials with green substitutes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacing part of fossil fuel with renewable energy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable packaging</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste management technologies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regards to the experts’ willingness to adopt the new, green oxo-products (AW) in CPGs (GOPinCPGs), it was found that 4 out of 8 companies are willing to adopt them in the production of cosmetics, 3 out of 11 in the production of personal care products and 2 out of 4 in the production of home care products.

The elaboration of the qualitative part of the inventory revealed some unforeseen aspects, such as:

Concerning the experts’ Perceptions regarding Green Practices, it was found that almost all (10) experts expressed positive to very positive attitudes concerning innovative green practices in the production of CPGs. 3 of them expressed their belief that sustainability is “100% our company’s philosophy”, “the key to business strategy”, and “plan to move 100 % to biodegradable products that have been produced with renewable carbon origin ingredients”. 1 of them expressed the most holistic idea that sustainability means “meeting consumer needs and implementing practices that will save the planet resources and reduce greenhouse gases (GHG)”, while another 1 said that “sustainability will be feasible only if there is European funding of projects oriented to innovative, green practices along with the appropriate marketing effort”.

There was a semi-structured question in which the interviewers informed the experts that “a funded by E.U. project aims to contribute to the non-carbon production technology. A photoelectrocatalytic reactor is to be designed, which will use recycled CO₂, instead of mineral carbon, for chemicals production. It is argued that this new, green technology is going to reduce production costs by 10% and the CO₂ emissions by 50% for each one of the oxo-products”. The respondents were kindly asked to express their thoughts and perceptions as freely as possible. There were 7 of them who just clearly stated their positive reaction towards the above innovative idea. The other 6 experts were rather cautious as they would like to know more about the possibilities of actual implementation of such a perspective. They all expressed scepticism regarding the effectiveness of CCU as a long-term solution for mitigating climate change, unawareness of the specifics of the recycled CO₂ technology, such as storage inconvenience, duration of stock and quality of the recycled CO₂ oxo-products and durability of the final products.
The 9 experts, who declared willingness to adopt any of the 3 new, innovative, green oxo-products, provided a list of prerequisites such as 7 respondents talking about the certified assurance for safety, functionality, equivalence for regulatory registration, more weight efficiency, efficacy, material validation. The prerequisite of cost reduction was mentioned by 3 respondents; 2 of them expressed the necessity of availability, 1 of them the supplier’s reliability, while there was also 1 of them who talked about the incentive of consumer demand.

With regards to the most crucial attributes of the green oxo-products in order to be utilised in production, the experts mentioned a long list of desirable attributes such as contribution to the climate change combat was mentioned by five experts, the reduction in fossil fuel consumption by three of them; each one of the carbon-neutral ingredients, product efficacy and safety appeared to be mentioned twice while a list of other attributes was mentioned by just one respondent (Table 3).

In 7 out of 13 companies, the experts declared their intention to leverage in their promotional effort the utilisation of new, innovative, green products made by recycled CO2, while 6 out of 13 did not respond in such a perspective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Green Oxo-products Attributes (GOPA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attribute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon neutral ingredients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to combat climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation of natural resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production of regenerative products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction in fossil fuel consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of CO2 waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilisation of advanced green technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LIMITATIONS and FRS

Limited previous research on this topic impacted the inventory design of this study, which should be amended in a future duplication. Low level of awareness concerning the production of green oxo-products by the utilisation of recycled CO2 impacted the firms’ observed level of participation and thus to a relatively low response rate (13/60). A future study would provide more fruitful information if it focused on those industries that actually intend to install a reactor to produce oxo-products by recycled CO2.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study indicated that although a tendency toward natural or organics is evident in the literature (Duran et al., 2014), at least in the case of personal care products (Statista, 2022), it is with no doubt that chemicals are still the main ingredient in the production process.

With regards to those European Green Deal actions, which concern the composition of a product (and thus are more related to this study), the focus was placed on the following: It was found that practices related to the composition of a product, such as “replacing part of the materials with green substitutes”, “moving towards renewable materials”, “moving towards biodegradable products”, “reduction of CO2 emissions” and “replace part of fossil fuels with renewable sources” are carried out by less than half of the examined industries. This is in line with Euromonitor International’s findings (2021; 2022). It is to be noted that 3 of these firms are among the largest in the sector. The most applied practices concern recycling and conservation of energy and water. This finding is in line with the relevant arguments in Cosmetics Europe (2022).

All executives hold positive attitudes towards innovative technologies that concern carbon neutrality. Half of them were found willing to include the new, green oxo-products (Glycolic acid, n-Valeraldehyde and Limoxal™) in the production process of their GPCs, stating prerequisites that concern quality and actual contribution to neutrality and are similar to those argued by Arning et al. (2019). The reservations expressed by the other half of the respondents concern the low level of awareness about the recycled CO2 oxo-products and the early stages of CCU implementation.

Finally, more than half of the firms declared their intention to valorise the future utilisation of these new, green oxo-products in the promotional campaign of their own CPGs.

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Exploring generational differences towards ethical consumption

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Abstract:

Purpose – This study aims to explore ethical consumption habits and differences in consumer behavior of different generations regarding the selection of channel marketing at the stage of eWOM and purchase intention. The authors intend to identify and analyze possible differences in consumer behavior in ethical market according to the two customers generations (Millennials, Generation Z).

Design/methodology/approach – Based on empirical investigation, an online survey conducted looking into how Generation Z ethical consumption habits compare to Millennials. Theory of Planned Behavior model (TPB) is applied to understand the impact of social media on these two generations consumers’ purchase intention and eWOM.

Findings – The results indicate the importance of social media on consumers’ attitudes, subjective norms, motivations, and the impact of these variables as the antecedents of ethical purchase intention across different generations.

Practical implications – This research has valuable implications for both academics and marketers. It provides new insights for scholars into understanding two different generations decision-making in ethical consumption. It successfully applied the Theory of Planned Behaviour to understand generational consumer behaviour. The findings can assist practitioners to determine effective marketing strategies to persuade Generation Z and Millennials to act ethically. Marketers should also consider how to personalize the content as part of their marketing campaigns targeting Generation Z and Millennials social media users.

Originality/value – This research offers a valuable contribution to current academic findings towards generations research as ethical consumers incorporating TPB framework.

Keywords: generations, consumer behavior, ethical consumption, social media

References


Communicating corporate social responsibility in an era of disruption - A study of Greek companies participating in CRI index

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Abstract:
The purpose of this paper is to examine the online presented social performance of 27 companies operating in Greece, from the years of the country's economic depression until today based on the latest data of Corporate Responsibility Index (CRI). The paper’s contribution is that it examines corporate behavior in an enduring depression-struck economy and further discusses the changes happened in the post-crisis period. The study employed content analysis to examine a period from 2008 to 2020. Findings suggest that the companies examined adapted to the economic reality, making a better allocation of their CSR-related spending. The companies included as a sample in this research, showed greater engagement in CSR, earning higher grades in their evaluation by the CRI, even if there was an overall reduction in the numbers of the businesses awarded with lower-level distinctions. This confirms the growing importance of CSR among Greek businesses, as well as the transition from the financial gain to respect by organizations for social issues related to the environment in which they operate. Implications for managers exist since companies could further communicate and promote CSR activities to the society since they have not fully done so. The study also contributes to the literature by initiating discussions on Corporate Social Responsibility communication.

Keywords: Communicating Corporate Social Responsibility, CR Index, Corporate Social Responsibility, Social Media.

Introduction
Awareness of the fact that modern business units are inextricably linked to the society in which they operate leads more and more to their direct and increasing participation in activities, the key feature of which is the existence of responsibility towards society, man and the environment, while their main goal is the improvement and well-being. These activities generally describe the term of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Several studies have shown that economic crises may influence CSR projects and that there is a drop in numbers of CSR activities because companies act conservatively (Karaibrahimoglu, 2010; Giannarakis & Theotokas, 2011; Fernandez-Feijoo Souto, 2009; Kavoura & Sahinidis, 2015; Sahinidis et al., 2018; Xanthopoulou, 2015; Kefis & Xanthopoulou, 2016). Some scholars have taken a different view of the economic crisis in terms of CSR implications, proposing that instead of a threat it may be an opportunity for the company to enhance its reputation, build or increase its trust by customers, employees, shareholders and the local community (Stoian, 2013; Jacob, 2012; Feijoo Souto, 2009; Michel et al., 2019; Pavlinek & Ženka, 2010; Perles-Ribes et al., 2016; Dias et al., 2016) They also conclude that the CSR is directly related to the competitive advantage and subsequently to building relationships of trust with stakeholders, resulting in positive financial results. Generally, during an economic recession, it was found that, especially in a country that has been hit hard by the effects of the crisis, such as Greece, the CSR has not shrunk significantly and that the country's companies have focused on corruption.

It is important for these corporate practices to be communicated to society as a whole, leading to consumer awareness and loyalty. This communication is favored by the upward trend in the use of social media. CSR communication has become a key part of corporate communications for companies in recent years (Fernández & Apaolaza, 2022; Ahmad et al., 2021; Arvidsson, 2010; Crane & Glozer, 2016). In order for companies to strengthen their relationships with stakeholders, individuals need to be informed about their CSR activities (Green & Peloa, 2014; Troise & Camilleri, 2021). One goal of corporate communication is to maintain and manage communication with stakeholders, in order to contribute positively to the company's reputation (Fombrun & van Riel, 1997; Greyser, 1999). Given the current common expectation is that companies behave
responsible in relation to the social and environmental impact of their activities (Callado-Munoz, 2011), corporate social responsibility communication has become a critical factor in stakeholder management (Nielsen, 2007).

Especially in recent years when internet access is increasing, organizations do not waste time and refer to CSR actions on the first page of their corporate website, in sections such as “about us”, “our values” or “our mission” (Hetze & Winstead, 2016; Ihlen, et al., 2011) or through the publicity of annual sustainability reports (Schröder, 2021).

The current study aims to examine the development of CSR activities and the further changes concerning the CSR actions and their communication from the beginning of the financial crisis (2008) until today. The international literature on interaction between financial crises and CSR actions and their communication is scarce and limited in its chronology to the very few years following the recession of the years 2007 and 2008 (Placier, 2011; Giannarakis & Theotokas, 2011; Miras-Rodriguez, Escobar-Perez & Carrasco Gallego, 2015). This research focuses on Greece as a case study, given that the country has been seriously affected by the economic crisis and offers a good example for analysis in regard to CSR. In a European survey that took place in 2013, Greece, Portugal and Spain were found to be the worst affected countries by the economic crisis (TNS Opinion & Social, 2013), which led to a significant decline in contributions on cultural activities and spending in general. Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain have been most affected by the financial and economic crisis (Miras-Rodriguez, Escobar-Perez & Carrasco Gallego, 2015). Furthermore, this study examines the CSR activities of Greek companies, expecting that the adverse economic conditions would make these companies rather conservative in terms of their spending on social initiatives, as the limited existing literature suggests on this issue (Sahinidis & Kavoura, 2014; Karaibrahimoglu, 2010; Giannarakis & Theotokas, 2011; Fernandez-Feijoo Souto, 2009). In order to examine the companies’ CSR communication strategy and have a specific and valid way of measuring the progress of CSR programs in period examined, this research studies the companies participating in the CR Index, which has been operating in Greece since 2008. This study also adds more information concerning the CSR communication and activities of Greek organizations that were awarded from CR Index and thus examine their behavior in the pre-crisis to the post crisis period (from 2008 to 2020-21).

Communicating CSR activities
CSR communication is associated with positive corporate values and stakeholder interest (Morsing & Schultz, 2006; Perez & del Bosque, 2012). CSR communication and advertising in times of recession could be considered as the first activities that a business would minimize. However, CSR communication seems to be a key aspect for an effective and profitable organization. A key way of CSR communication is through corporate reporting (Bowers, 2010; Morhardt, 2010), which companies use in strategic ways (Nielsen & Thomsen, 2007). CSR reporting has been described as a way for organizations to provide information to various stakeholders on social and environmental issues (Golob & Bartlett, 2007). Currently, over 90 percent of the world's 250 largest companies publish CSR reports. CSR reports are a specific type of corporate report, whether printed or electronic, that provides information on the economic, social and environmental impact of doing business in a way comparable to the company's Global Reporting Initiative (Bowers, 2010; Signitzer & Prexl, 2008). Many authors have argued that the value of CSR communication is the organization’s ability to inspire consumers and other stakeholders to recognize companies among their competitors (Ma i et. al., 2021; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Lii & Lee, 2012; Maignan & Ferrell, 2004; Sen et al., 2006). However, other results have shown that CSR communication activities do not always reflect positively on a company and a strategic approach. CSR can adversely affect the perceived honesty of the business and its efforts (Lauwo et al., 2019; Sen et al., 2006; van de Ven, 2008; Wagner et al., 2009; Brun, 2011). Subsequently, CSR communication has been studied in terms of the impact that the economic crisis has had on it. Green and Pelozo (2015) through a content analysis of more than 4000 printed ads found that instead of reducing CSR communication levels during the recession, the chances of locating ads and messages containing CSR messages actually increased during the recession. The changes observed were not in the quantity but in the content of these ads. In particular CSR messages were more likely to be incorporated into “mainstream” advertising.

Communicating CSR activities toward both internal and external constituencies can have considerable positive effects, elicitting favorable responses by building or reinforcing a reputation which may be particularly important during crises times (Jones et al., 2000; Little & Little, 2000; Zyglidopoulos, 2003; Bhattacharya et al, 2012). The reputation of an organization is also directly related to the communication of the CSR (Boysselle, 2015). Benn et.al (2016) suggest that top executives should not set priorities that could undermine the confidence of stakeholders thus confirming theory that corporate reputation is a function of complex relationships and exchanges between organizations and stakeholders. Organizations must therefore prioritize not only consumers with high levels of CSR ethics but also those with financial expectations, essentially linking CSR expectations to the roles of knowledge, perception and motivation, as well as communication actions. Fisher (2015) discusses how communicating CSR practices can increase customer’s loyalty and willingness to “forgive” a company, if necessary, when that company supports causes similar to the ones the customer cares about.
Tench and Jones (2015) argued for the necessity of use of social media in the presentation of CSR activities. Ali, Jiménez-Zarco and Bicho (2015) found that social media is a very important platform to communicate CSR activities and further research needs to take place. Communicating companies’ performance in their official websites under the CRI and their promotion and advertising of such performance is the other aim of this paper. Suggestions can be made that marketers and advertisers of companies, may promote these CSR activities and make their projects known to the public. In a similar way to sponsorship, where advertisers articulate a clear sponsorship strategy taking into consideration consumers and target groups ( Jacobs et al., 2014), CSR managers should promote and communicate their activities to the public since people are not always aware about companies’ CSR activities.

The Internet is widely accessible in Greece with the household internet access at 31% in 2008 to 76.5% in 2018. This percentage is increased by 2.6% in 2019 compared to 2018, while during the period from 2010 to 2019 it was recorded an increase of 69.2%. This allows for inferences to be made in regard to the Internet’s potential use by companies in order to communicate their activities to the Greek population. CSR communication specialists have not yet invented standard ways of promoting relevant activities undertaken by companies (Bhattacharya et al., 2012; Hilderbrand et al., 2011; Bode, 2012) and CRI-type awards allow for such a communication to take place. The European Commission intends to initiate a European award program, in regard to CSR activities and this may allow for the public dissemination of these activities, motivating more companies to participate and informing society about them, since awareness is rather low (European Commission, 2011). Various techniques can be used to communicate CSR activities and to raise public awareness about the concept, including awards, prizes and giving public recognition to pioneering companies in the field. Sustainability reports and codes of conduct are among the ways of communicating CSR actions and companies may provide information on their website or via newsletters (Bode, 2012). Social media, the consumer-generated media, allow the creation and dissemination of information online where consumers may participate and companies may communicate with them ( Mangold & Faulds, 2009). People on social media collaborate, exchange information, share and send messages over an electronic medium, engage collectively and interact and they share content such as video, photos, images, text, ideas and they are the creators or co-creators of this material (Goyal, 2013). In fact, literature provides an extensive list of the most important social media including social networking sites, micro-blogging, blogs such as user sponsored blogs, company sponsored websites, sharing sites for video or photos, viewing pictures, collaborative websites and news delivery sites, social bookmarking sites where users discuss their point of view and recommend online news stories, videos, music ( Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Goyal, 2013; Stavrianea & Kavoura, 2015). Furthermore, with the prevalence of social media usage among consumers, brands have increasingly utilized paid social media influencer (SMI) endorsements in their corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication (Cheng et al., 2021).

Limited research that has taken place has illustrated that, although the internet and a company’s corporate website is an effective communication tool, that may promote companies’ CSR activities, also found was that CSR communication and interactive features in American companies were not commonly displayed in the corporate websites, with only a 27% providing such information (Gomez & Chalmeta, 2011). Similar results were found in the European context, where the use of social media in communicating CSR and the online interactive communication among participants, did not in reality take place since less than 56% of the communication departments use online communities in their communication (Miras-Rodríguez et al., 2015). On the other hand, people’s point of view on whether there should be information about CSR activities differs. There is a major discrepancy between European citizens and citizens in other continents with regard to the whether they believe they are informed about companies’ CSR activities or not. People in the USA are willing to listen to the companies’ CSR activities (Cone Communications, 2013) while most European citizens do not feel they need to be informed on this issue based on European research that has taken place with only 36% feeling well informed on this topic (Flash Eurobarometer, 363, 2013). In regard to the communication of a company’s CSR activities, stakeholders may not only be informed but they may respond and participate ( Capriotti, 2011; Morsing & Schultz, 2006; Gomez, 2021; Fernández et al., 2022). Adi and Grigore (2015) argued that multinational companies although they have a presence online and communicate their CSR activities, not all of them have a social media presence and even if they do, they may have only one social media platform while user interaction does not exist.

**Methodology**

One of the most popular methods in the study of CSR is content analysis (Aras et al., 2010; Holcomb et al., 2007; Orlitzky et al., 2003; Barbosa & de Oliveira, 2021). Content analysis is widely used in management research (Lune & Berg, 2017; Neuendorf, 2002), as it provides rich and in-depth accounts on a wide range of topics. According to Neuman (2003) content analysis is a technique for gathering and analyzing the content of text. The content refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated (see Figure 2)
The present study examines all the companies that have participated in the CR Index between 2008 and 2018 looking into their economic performance, in total, so that we can draw conclusions about the relationship between the trajectory of their economics and their CSR behaviors in the twelve year period under study. A well-defined period of twelve years starting in 2008, when the first applications in CRI took place in Greece, till 2020 and the inclusion of all cases, that is, 27 companies that have participated to be evaluated under the CRI index, comprise the sample of this study. The examination of the economic performance of these companies since 2008, when the Greek recession started, may allow one to reach conclusions, in regard to the way these companies behaved in CSR terms. In the specific study, the researchers sought words and phrases as they were specified from the themes codes associated with the communication of the CRI in the companies’ corporate websites and whether there was reference in the awards received from the CRI. This took place in the so called direct way, those words or phrases that are physically present and counted rather than on the latent content which depends on the subjective judgment in order to lead to reliable results (Robson, 2010; Leiss et al., 2008; Holstein & Gubrium, 1998). It is typical to note that the authors relied on the information provided by the companies alone, which does not allow one to discuss issues such as CSR activity quality or effectiveness.

In detail, it was examined whether the economic crisis influences CSR activities in Greece during a financial crisis period and the changes that were occurred in the adoption of such activities and their communication in a post-crisis period in Greece. We specifically studied the companies that participated and were awarded in the CR Index from 2008 to 2020. These organizations were selected as those that adopt and implement socially responsible practices in various areas (environment, community actions, workplace etc.) related to the field of corporate social responsibility. Then, regarding the communication of their CSR actions, we looked on the corporate websites and their social media, the reports of these companies on their CSR awards and whether they refer to them on their home pages. In addition, the aim was to study the variability in the participation of organizations in the CR index, observing that in 2008 when the economic crisis in Greece began with eight organizations participating, and ending in 2020 where after gradual increases, the number of these companies reached nine. To extract the data, we first visited the corporate sites in order to see their main sections and then we examined whether the awards gained and the CR Index logo are mentioned on their home page. Next, for each organization separately, we examined in which social media it has access to and whether they refer to CSR actions and the CR index award. The CR Index official website was also a key source of access to the data needed. These companies were selected from the CR Index which has been implemented in Greece since 2008 and specifically the scoreboards from 2008 to 2020-21, as companies and organizations that are distinguished for their high performance in Corporate Responsibility based on CR Index & CRI Pass ratings.

The scant literature associating the economic crisis of a country with CSR activities suggests that the decrease of CSR projects is greater in the USA than in Europe and other countries (Karaibrahimoglu, 2010: 384; Miras-Rodríguez et al., 2015). In periods of crisis, CSR may adversely affect the company profitability and management may opt to decrease spending on CSR projects during financial downturns (Fernandez-Feijoo Souto, 2009; Karaibrahimoglu, 2010; Giannarakis & Theotokas, 2011: 2). According to Njoroge (2009) companies are in consensus that financial crises have a negative effect on social projects. Nonetheless, Miras-Rodríguez et al. (2015) found that for those European countries that suffered from the economic crisis, they did not minimize but on the contrary, they increased their environmental activities. Behavior of firms in general, can be understood within the context of a set of cultural dimensions and is contingent on the culture of the country in which they operate (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Williams & Zirkin, 2006). CSR managers may feel more of a personal responsibility toward collective action, social cohesion and the community in general, especially in poor countries, when governmental institutions fail to address these concerns. On the contrary, in wealthier countries, the welfare of the greater community is not among the companies’ priorities and managers tend to focus on ‘closer to home’ activities (e.g. employees, shareholders/owners, management) (Waldman et al., 2006; House et al., 2004).

Greek companies and public sector bodies will be invited to integrate CSR in their business strategy and to develop actions and corporate responsibility practices. The aim of these actions is to increase the positive impact of business towards society, in conjunction with the scope and nature of economic activity. The CRI is a recognized assessment tool and point of reference, for the recognition of the CSR performance of Greek enterprises. Participating companies and their CSR performance are being audited, concerning their
conformance with an international set of criteria. Companies submit files describing their efforts in CSR activities and are evaluated, based on those reports. The latter are accompanied by justification and they display the company’s progress, in order for the management to be able to receive the appropriate guidance over the CSR activities and the way the companies communicate these activities to the public and stakeholders (Sahinidis & Hyz, 2018). The Corporate Responsibility Institute is a civil non-profit organization, representing the CRI in Greece, in cooperation with the Business in the Community, another non-profit organization following CSR-related issues. The Institute’s primary goal is to provide the Greek and multinational companies an internationally recognized assessment tool for their CSR performance, for better integration of strategy and practice. More than 26 Greek and multinational businesses, employing thousands of workers in Greece playing a crucial role in the Greek economy, have participated to date, in the evaluation of the CRI (CRI Pass, 2022).

Results and Discussion

In general, there is an increasing tendency among businesses to participate in the CRI, since it entered the Greek market (Table 2 and Figure 3) but we can also see a reduction of organizations that participate in CRI from 2014 to 2017 and from 2018 to 2020.

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<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>14</td>
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Figure 3. Number of Participating Companies in the CRI per year (2008-2020)

The economic depression years caused a steep decline in the companies’ profits between 2010, 2011 and 2012 (Kavoura & Sahinidis, 2015). Despite the drop in sales for a 6-year period that companies operating in Greece experienced, we observe that their performance regarding CSR activities gradually rises and becomes more effective. While the economic performance of the participating companies is suffering, their participation in the CRI appears consistent, increasing their social performance in a twelve years period, as measured by the CRI, according to Table 3 and Figure 4.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIAMOND</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLATINUM</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOLD</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>SILVER</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>BRONZE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
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</table>

Source: Data Analysis from the CR Index official website
Table 3 and Figure 4 illustrate that companies do not seem to be influenced in their CSR–related behavior especially during the economic crisis, because they become more effective and they provide, increasingly higher level, award-winning activities, for the benefit of the community where they operate. The toll paid by the companies, generated by the economic crisis, becomes apparent by the inverted U-shaped trend of the number of awards, in the course of the pre-crisis and crisis years. The ascending number of the awards offered in 2008 and 2009, increased in 2010 and 2011 and stabilized in 2012 and 2013 despite the pressures of the shrinking economy. In 2013, ten of the awards granted were of the top two categories, while in 2008 the number was zero and in 2009 it was only two. We also observe discontinuity in awards; however, it is important that all their awards belong to the top 3 categories of the CR index, which are the “Diamond, Platinum and Gold”, with a negligible silver distinction. This confirms that the participating CRI companies are gradually organizing more targeted and efficient Corporate Social Responsibility operations. After collecting and analysing the data in Table 3, is obvious that in the period 2008-2013 the participation of companies was constantly increasing. However, the number of companies decreases over the years and this may be a result of the deep economic crisis in Greece. On the other hand, we see a significant increase in awards in better positions such as Gold and Platinum, culminating for the first time in the 2 Diamond awards for the year 2020-2021. Also, as the number of entries decreases, the distribution of prizes is worth mentioning, a more equal distribution is observed, which proves the gradual transfer from the lower award positions to the upper ones. These findings demonstrate the gradual improvement in CSR practices by companies. In sum, the numbers in the Table 3 above indicate that, although companies limit in some ways their CSR practices, they are still very serious about those practices, making them of greater quality, efficiency and social impact, as one can subsume by the composition of award types in the two most recent years. In addition, awards of the three top categories (Diamond, Platinum and Gold) were generally increased which shows again the quality of CSR activities that were made even more the total number of awards was dropped.

Table 4 discusses the number of companies that participate in social media (left column) and the number of the same companies that communicate their CSR activities on each social medium (right column). From an initial comparison between 2015 and 2020 we observe that the participation of companies in three most popular social media (Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn) showed the largest increase. Table 4 and Figure 5 show the CSR communication through the sample’s official social media accounts. As we can see there is a great improvement especially on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Linkedin, with the lowest percentages on flickr, google + and pinterest.

Table 4. No of companies on social media and no of companies’ communicating CSR activities on social media in 2015 and 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media</th>
<th>No of companies on Social Media</th>
<th>No of companies that communicate CSR Activities on social media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FACEBOOK</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWITTER</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOUTUBE</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. No of companies on social media and no of companies’ communicating CSR activities on social media in 2015 and 2020
The findings presented in Tables 4 and 5 illustrate the huge potential existing on the use of social media and has not been implemented yet, adding to the limited literature on the use of social media for the communication of a company’s CSR activities (Capiotti, 2011; Adi & Grigore, 2015; Ali et al., 2015). Although the number of companies that participate on social media was increased especially on Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn (the highest incensement) and Instagram, the number of companies’ communication of CSR was almost the same. All of these organizations have a special section of corporate social responsibility in their official sites however, the CRI logo was found only in 2 cases in 2015 and in 3 cases in 2020, which shows that there is not a significant improvement. Concerning the CRI’s reference on corporate websites we see that there is a reduction.

Table 5. CRI’s reference on corporate websites in 2015 (25 companies) and 2020-Number of companies (total 27 participating companies in CRI today)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRI’s reference on corporate websites</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRI’S logo and reference on corporate websites’ first webpage</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR’s reference on corporate websites</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings presented in Table 4 and Figure 5 show that out of 14% of companies that communicate CSR actions on social media in 2015, today the corresponding percentage is 48%. Companies, unlike in the past, actively use both their official corporate websites and social media, thus giving stakeholders the opportunity to interact and actively participate in CSR operations.
from 76% to 50% of companies that refer to this award, as many of them communicate other awards (such as “Great Place to Work”).

Conclusions
In Greece, there is not yet legislation that would guide companies on how to define and deal with CSR. There is no legal framework and a national strategy for CSR is lacking. The companies under study have decided to be evaluated under international standards on CSR and they operate proactively awaiting a national policy that is on its way. CSR payoff is normally expected in the long run and as such it is viewed by companies as a long term investment. Companies need continuous effort before they can be efficient in their CSR activities. They should continue to be active in regard to measuring their performance under the internationally acknowledged CRI. Companies need to continue and strengthen their commitments for CSR activities especially when their countries are in economic crises. Corporate Social Responsibility contributes to the financial performance of a company in the long run. In the results of the present research there were individual cases that confirmed this theory, but the economic environment in Greece is so unstable due to the great economic crisis and the current pandemic, which affects the relationship between CSR and economic performance.

A main finding was that despite the poor financial situation due to the previous financial crisis and the current Covid-19 pandemic CSR actions have not been limited, on the contrary, it is observed a more organized and efficient CSR action plan. Examining the CRI index, we saw for the first time the achievement of two Diamond awards and in fact to companies that participated in CRI since its entry into the market in 2008. This distinction can be interpreted in three ways. First, participation in CRI forces and guides companies to improve their CSR tactics, secondly, the concept of CSR is adopted and matures in the Greek market and society every year and thirdly, the Covid-19 pandemic forced companies to take more organized CSR measures and actions. On the other hand, while almost the entire sample of the survey mentions CSR on its corporate website, there was no significant mention of the CRI logo.

The findings of this paper suggest that marketers and advertisers of companies may promote these CSR activities and make their projects known to the public. In a similar way to sponsorship, where advertisers articulate a clear sponsorship strategy taking into consideration consumers and target groups (Jacobs et al., 2014), CSR managers should promote and communicate to the public, since people are not always cognizant of CSR activities. The paper adds to the literature discussions on Corporate Social Responsibility communication and the ways these actions are affected by financial crisis. Furthermore, it brings forth the changes concerning the CSR actions and their communication of the selected organizations from the beginning of the financial crisis until today, by expanding the limited chronology with twelve years of research following the recession of 2008.

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Businesses under the microscope: Are their moral codes in dispute? Corporate Social Responsibility and the principle of Transparency as a public case of marketing.

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John Velentzas
Professor, University of Western Macedonia, Greece

Abstract
The principle of transparency was considered an integral part of Business Ethics. Anything that is transparent is not always moral, but anything that remains secret or opaque is almost certainly not moral. Openness, revelation allows discussion and critique of business decisions, codes of conduct and ethics. It is argued that businesses cannot be isolated from public morality. They have no choice but to operate in a more complex moral environment, an environment that is not only constantly evolving, but largely out of their control. The classic and over time examples of Maxwell, Enron, Arthur Andersen internationally and the daily cases of financial fraud revealed abroad and in Greek economic environment convince that deviations from business ethics (while well covered and inflated in times of economic prosperity), fictitious or not, were everyone and institutions, businesses and individuals (rightly or wrongly) enjoy it, promote it and participate in it.

Keywords: Business ethics, marketing, transparency, moral codes, control, public relations, financial fraud, Corporate Social Responsibility.

1. INTRODUCTION

Applying the model of innovation and technology to modern business strategy, Bill Joy, Chief Scientist at Sun Microsystems until 2003, wrote an extensive article (Badiou, 2001): 21st Century Technologies - Genetics, Nanotechnology and Robotics - are so powerful so that they can create completely new categories of accidents, abuses and unethical behaviours. For the first time, the biggest risk is that these accidents are within the reach of individuals, small groups and businesses (Drucker, 1981). The focus of the business is ownership alone (Drucker, 1981). It is also argued that business should operate with only the ethics of “play” and not with the ethics of society. This is the well-known position of Albert Carr. In this way, the goal becomes victory over the opponent. In his article “Is Business Bluff Ethics?”, Albert Carr became known for his position that business practices are analogous to those of the game of poker (Carr, 1968). Conscious misinformation, concealment of facts, exaggeration, bluff. Anything that ethics in poker tolerates is tolerable for business as well. This is because, all parties invent from the beginning the rules of the game. Whether deception violates freedom of choice is a matter of knowledge and resistance of the buyer or consumer (Carr, 1968).

But is business ethics inherent or coexists, in any form, with the principle of transparency?

2. THE PRINCIPLE OF TRANSPARENCY

The principle of transparency was considered an integral part of business ethics. (On these in general, see Chonko, p. 157 ff., St. Carroll / M. Gannon, Ethical dimensions of International Management, SSB, Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications (1997), p. 15 ff., 17, 20, 23, 26, 29)
Anything that is transparent is not always moral, but anything that remains secret or opaque is almost certainly not moral. Openness, revelation, allows discussion and critique of business decisions, codes of conduct and ethics (Badiou, 2001). It is argued that businesses cannot be isolated from public morality. They have no choice but to operate in a more complex moral environment, an environment that is not only constantly evolving, but largely out of their control (Drucker, 1981).

The examples or always significant paradigms of Maxwell, Enron, Arthur Andersen internationally and the daily cases of financial fraud convince that deviations from business ethics while well covered and inflated in times of economic prosperity, fictitious or not, participate in it (Carr, 1968).


The author of a book on this subject begins his work by writing:

*If Al Capone had only paid his taxes, this book might not have been written.* The issue belongs to the field of international crime with charging of the financial system and the financial markets and with the stories of the blue collars. (CT. Plambeck, The Money Laundering Control Act of 1980 and Banking Secrecy, The International Lawyer, Vol. 22 (1988), p. 29. In general, see W.C. Gilmore, (Ed) Research Center for International Law University of Cambridge. International efforts to combat Money Laundering, Cambridge, Grotius Publications (1992). The phenomenon is now considered a global threat and starts simply from the existence of “cash” money. We all see it in the movies: every drug trafficking, terrorist act, smuggling, other particular forms of crime, is strongly associated with cash, that is, with the anonymity provided by cash.

a) need to disguise the origin and who the real owner is,
b) need to be in control of the money, and
c) need to change the form of money.

Internationally, there are 3 phases:
1) placement, pre-placement (placement),
2) laying, the main wash, and
3) integration or recycling (integration) ie legalization (Badiou, 2001).

3. CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS A BUSINESS OF ETHICS

The idea of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which is part of our daily vocabulary and daily practice. The latter is added to the fields of communication and marketing, but also management, offering them the vitality that each branch needs related to mechanisms of transmission (and respectively reception) of information and exercise of influence and persuasion to the public. On the other hand, it is considered as an economic and administrative phenomenon that affects the mode of operation and structure of companies (Carr, 1968).

Is CSR a case of marketing?

At the same time, corporate social responsibility by definition includes social components, since it does not operate self-referentially (Badiou, 2001). On the contrary, it affects - directly or indirectly - the society in whose favor it operates, prima facie. Thus, it has attracted the interest not only of business, but also of civil society and governments worldwide (Drucker, 1981).

Carroll made the definition of Corporate Social Responsibility clearer when he stressed that financial and legal responsibility is "required", moral responsibility is "expected", and discreet (or charitable or voluntary) responsibility is "desirable". In this way, he made the distinction between the traditional and the new responsibilities of a company. In these 2 categories is the quintessence of Corporate Social Responsibility (Archie B. Carroll, The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility, op. Cit., Pp. 39-48, Archie B. Carroll, The Four Faces of Corporate Citizenship, the .p., Archie B. Carroll / A. K. Buchholtz, Business and Society, op. cit., pp. 40-45, Archie B. Carroll, Managing ethically with global stakeholders, op. cit., pp. 116-118).
Through the above definitions we identify the basic characteristics of the concept of CSR (Carroll, 1979):
• It is self-commitment,
• It is permanent,
• Concerns social, environmental and ultimately economic issues,
• Aimed at both the internal and external environment of the business,
• Fits into a strategic business model, and
• Aims for responsible development through balancing the costs that externalize the operation of the company to the environment and society(Carroll, 1979).

4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology developed is the case study that is different in terms of analysis. An attempt was made to "enlighten" aspects of CSR less prominent in the public.

The CSR has three dilemmas:
1. The balance between the financial aspirations of companies and their responsibilities at the social level and in the field of environmental protection. For example: how to move a company that needs to increase beer sales and at the same time publicly support responsible alcohol consumption?
2. It is or it seems: how much public relations and marketing are involved in the field of CSR.
3. Professionalism or personal views? They are, indeed, those who deal with CSR more ethical or more assertive trying to dogmatically determine what is moral and what is not, responsible or not through charities? Should they be involved in politics or in the public sector? What is the measurement of ethics to that?

As a case study we choose to present aspects of ethical or not behaviour and action of Apple produced in China by FOXCONN and to examine the element of transparency as a flexible and sometimes fake kind of ethical measurement.

5. THE SHADES OF (UN)CONCIOUSNESS OF APPLE COMPANY. Ethics and transparent procedures.

Most of APPLE hardware is produced in China by FOXCONN without the slightest connection to ecological philosophy or ethics. Nevertheless, despite harsh criticism from GREENPEACE, APPLE is making it clear to the public that it is constantly improving its performance in the field of environmental protection. APPLE data centers operate with renewable energy sources more than the respective units of most companies in the technological industry(Ngai and Chan,2012).

But what about the workers at FOXCONN? How they treat them?
Apple’s Supplier Code of Conduct (up-dated regularly, mostrecentely in 2019) saysunequivocally that: “All workers deserve a fair and ethical workplace (Ngai and Chan, 2012). All of them must be treated with dignity
and respect”. An argument that is interesting is how the transparency element as a kind of finding the truth is secured.

The answer is negative, it is not secured and we have a controversial argument (Ngai and Chan, 2012): The suppliers of the iPhone use kid labour to extract these minerals from the mines which they pay the miners starvation wages (Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, 2018). International Amnesty report showed that 40,000 kids live in terribly dangerous conditions in mines within the Democratic Republic of the Congo that extract raw materials1. Death, torture, suffering, violations at worklife and health problems are a routine. Among these corporations, the foremost important is Foxconn (Hon Hai exactitude Industry), a manufacturing company from Taiwan. It generated an annual revenue of $160 billion in 2017. Foxconn, which employs 1.3 million people is the third largest company in the world in terms of employed staff, after Walmart and McDonalds (Kraemer Kenneth L., Linden and Dedrick, 2011). The main public and formal statement of the company is that Apple phones would cost about $ 30,000 if workers in China were paid decent wages, according to new research showing that the exploitation of these people is 25 times higher than it was in the days of Karl Dickens and Marx (Marx, 2014). So, where exactly the ethical and transparent line can be drawn?

Low wages and dangerous work conditions – together with daily humiliation – characterize the lives of the employees. Karl Marx calculated the degree of exploitation of workers (Marx, 2014). In one of the examples he used for the textile industry he concluded that the percentage of goodwill or the degree of exploitation was 100% (Marx, 2014). Researchers at the Tricontinental Research Institute applied the same calculations (Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, 2018) to the process of making an iPhone and concluded that a worker in China or in Africa has reached 2.458%, which is 25 times higher than in his day (Kraemer Kenneth L., Linden and Dedrick, 2011). It translates to underage children working twelve hours for one or two dollars a day, but also to adult workers who see 1,700 devices pass through their hands per day (Ngai and Chan, 2012). But the rise in exploitation is not just about Asia's rising economies. Today some of the highest exploitation rates are observed in the Arab world (Kraemer Kenneth L., Linden and Dedrick, 2011). The degree of exploitation is steadily increasing with each new iPhone 4 and after (Ngai and Chan, 2012).

The International Amnesty report concludes that the current financial system is not able to produce devices such as a mobile iPhone while offering decent wages to employees. That is explained logically by the existence of a wage which would automatically mean the probable (un) afforded increase of costs of an iPhone and could signify the end of the capitalistic system or the fall of an economic empire (Marx, 2014).

CONCLUSIONS

As long as society continues to move in general with a liberal orientation, entrepreneurship will play a pivotal but controversial role. Ethics, also in the form of Corporate Social Responsibility, does not seem to adequately explain how some of the dilemmas inherent in a business that seeks to be profitable and at the same time maintain a good and ethical attitude towards society can be reconciled.

1 Amongst the raw materials in an iPhone, you will find:

- Aluminium.
- Arsenic.
- Carbon.
- Cobalt.
- Coltan (Niobium and Tantalum).
- Copper.
- Gallium.
- Gold.
- Iron.
- Platinum.
- Silicon.
- Tin.
Furthermore, it seems that the companies are not enough persuasive when managers use an ethical face to present their targets. Marketing and PR is a major criterion to hide the real aims of the companies or to reveal only an image far beyond the true one.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that in the United Kingdom the main academic center for the study of Corporate Social Responsibility issues was established at the University of Nottingham (University) with resources from the BAT (British American Tobacco) group. So, the ethics as Kant said, must represent the real thing, the ethical intention of companies, the good will, the truth even the sacrifice for the common wealth and health. On, the contrary, when the ethics have an utilitarian point, in every way, then it is Marketing and part of economic attempt for success.

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Supply Chain Management
Using Lean Thinking and Industry 5.0 to create Customer Value and to deliver Customer Satisfaction efficiently

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1 Introduction

According to Kotler “Marketing is the art of creating genuine customer value. It is the art of helping your customer become better off. The marketer’s watchwords are quality, service, and value.” However, recent developments have shown, that supply chains are no longer stable but are rather significantly vulnerable. Reasons were for example COVID-19, lockdowns, delayed shipments, scarce containers, and lack of skilled staff, geopolitical turbulences or the climate crisis. Therefore, customers expect also sustainably created products that are available in stores at competitive prices…

Kotler also formulated, that “Marketing, more than any other business function, deals with customers. Creating customer value and satisfaction are the heart of modern marketing thinking and practice. Marketing is the delivery of customer satisfaction at a profit. The two fold goal of marketing is to attract new customers by promising superior value and to keep current customers by delivering satisfaction.” The American Marketing Association (ama.org), stated that “Marketing can be defined as the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (ama.org., accessed 18th June 2022).

One can recognize, that efficient, lean operations and a flawless Supply Chain (SC) are the crucial enablers to meet the Marketing objectives. Marketing also means fulfilling customer demands in a profitable way (see Kotler et al., 2015, p. 9). Besides the classical 4 P’s (Product, Price, Place and Promotion) there are the additional 3 P’s (Personnel/People, Processes and Physical-Facilities), leading to the 7 Ps\(^2\). In this conference paper, it is the objective to focus on the driving attributes of value creation, that are predominantly related to the following three P’s: Physical-Facilities, People and Processes. One could even add the aspect of “Performance”. Nowadays, digital technology enables companies to deliver their products efficiently to their customers.

This is leading to the questions, how Marketing, Lean and Digital Technology fit together or in other words: How to use Lean Thinking and Industry 5.0 to create Customer Value and to deliver Customer Satisfaction efficiently? This will be answered in the following sections.

2 Methodology and Research Questions

Within this paper, the qualitative results of recently conducted empirical research (Surrow, 2021; Andrade, 2022; Stachowiak, 2022; Reif, 2021, Cheema 2022) connected to relevant literature is presented to better evaluate the concept of Industry 5.0, which is considered to be the next industrial revolution (Paschek et al. 2019; Frederico 2021). Thus, it is important to assess the requirements for Lean Industry 5.0 implementations.

The research questions addressed to answer the title of this paper “Using Lean Thinking and Industry 5.0 to create Customer Value and to deliver Customer Satisfaction efficiently” are shown below:

\(^2\) https://www.mtp.org/magazin/2019/09/26/marketing-mix-die-7-ps/
3 Key findings and recommendations

The results of the research conducted between 2021 and 2022 are presented in the following sections. For detailed insights, the theses by Andrade (2022), Surrow (2021), Reif (2021), Cheema (2022) and Stachowiak (2022) are recommended.

3.1 How is Marketing connected to Lean Thinking and Digital Technology?

Lean is a Supply Chain and Operations Management (SCOM) philosophy connected to a variety of operational advantages, such as the reduction of costly non-value-added process steps, while at the same time improving quality, increasing customer focus and respecting people etc. (Ballé et al., 2017; Gaiardelli et al. 2019; Ivanov et al., 2021).

The classical Lean approach aims to identify all aspects of value creation for the customer, at the same time eliminating non-value-adding activities referred to as the 7+X types of waste and thus increasing efficiency (see Womack and Jones, 1998, Womack et al., 2007). Lean as a means to manage “flow efficiency” (Modig and Ahlstrom, 2012) simultaneously incorporates the ideas of quality management and continuous improvement (Stevenson, 2018, p. 610). As one can see, Lean Thinking is also strongly connected to relevant Ps of the Marketing Mix, i.e. process, physical-facility, price, people (and performance).

Lean has a long history dating back into the beginning of mass production, but was shaped in the 1950s when the Toyota Production System was created, followed by intensive research on the Lean principles during the International Motor Vehicle Program (IMVP) that started in 1980. Importantly, a Lean implementation will in most cases not be a simple and easy task and will also not take place without problems. In order to benefit from Lean and to introduce it correctly, the typical mistakes need to be assessed beforehand. As we are living at times of the digital transformation, it is also relevant to evaluate the relationship between Lean and Industry 4.0 (I4.0). I4.0 is connected to the automation and improvement of SCOM processes, required to establish reconfigurable supply chains (Dolgui et al., 2020) and it plays a crucial role at times of climate change as well as in globally turbulent economic situations.

As Surrow (2021) pointed out, Industry 4.0 is representing key technologies to mitigate today’s manufacturing challenges, such as increasingly shorter product life cycle or increasingly complex manufacturing processes (Spatah et al. 2013; Bauer et al. 2014; Schuh et al. 2017). The vision of Industry 4.0 includes real-time improvement and self-organized value adding networks that enable cost and resource efficient production processes (Kagermann et al. 2013; Bauernhansl 2014). Although Industry 4.0 technologies are just in the process of being implemented especially in SMEs, there is already a new paradigm: called Industry 5.0.

The explained linkage between Marketing, Lean, Industry 4.0 / 5.0 is shown in the illustration below:

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3 The “7+X wastes” according to Lean can be classified as (Tsipoulanidis, 2018):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1) Over-production</th>
<th>5) Inventories</th>
<th>- not meeting customer needs or</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2) Waiting</td>
<td>6) Motion and Movement</td>
<td>- wasting talent &amp; knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Transport</td>
<td>7) Defects</td>
<td>- water &amp; energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Over-processing</td>
<td>plus “x”</td>
<td>- materials &amp; resources...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In contrast to the stated advantages, the specific benefits of Industry 4.0 technology usage remains rather vague (e. g. Kagermann et al. 2013; Bauer et al. 2014; Bauernhansl 2014; Jeschke et al. 2017; Oks et al. 2017; Nahavandi 2019). As the author’s exchange with practitioners from German small and medium sized companies at numerous conferences in 2021 and 2022 has revealed, companies often face the challenge to be able to validate the potentials that can be achieved by Industry 4.0 technologies or to meet the expected benefits.

The new concept of Industry 5.0 (shown above) was developed by the European Commission referring to known technologies from Industry 4.0 and additionally emphasizing human-centricity, resilience and sustainability aspects (Breque et al. 2021, p. 6). As Breque et al. (2021) formulated: “Industry 5.0 complements the existing Industry 4.0 paradigm by highlighting research and innovation as drivers for a transition to a sustainable, human-centric and resilient European industry. It moves focus from shareholder to stakeholder value, with benefits for all concerned. Industry 5.0 attempts to capture the value of new technologies, providing prosperity beyond jobs and growth, while respecting planetary boundaries, and placing the wellbeing of the industry worker at the centre of the production process.”

Carayannis et al. (2021, p. 594) stated that “Industry 5.0, which can be considered the answer to the question of a renewed human centric industrial archetype, starting from the (cultural, managerial, organizational, philosophical, and structural) restructuration of an industry’s production processes. The importance of this new perspective originates by the fact that Industry 4.0 is just at the early stage of development and that its main achievements can be expected not earlier than 2020–2025.”

In other words, it has been criticized, that ongoing Industry 4.0 implementations are to a very high degree strongly connected to its technological advancements and, thus lacking a focus on the human, environment and economic stability side (Breque et al. 2021, p. 5), which will be covered under the Industry 5.0 paradigm. To meet the foundations of Marketing (see p. 1), Lean principles need to be applied, Industry 4.0 technology needs to be operationally implemented and Industry 5.0 needs to be on the agenda to cover the aspects of the human focus, sustainability and resilience during the value creation.

Illustration 1: Marketing, Lean and Industry 4.0 / 5.0

3.2 Mistakes of past Lean implementations

According to Andrade (2022), Lean aims to increase efficiency and to remove wasteful, non-value adding steps (in the sense of e. g. unnecessary activities or processes etc.) through continuous improvement, enhanced quality and operational performance of an organization (Ukey et al. 2021). In the past, Lean has demonstrated to generate numerous advantages, but its application may be complex and time-consuming (Almeida Marodin et al. 2016; Bevilacqua et al. 2017).

The research results by Andrade (2022) have shown, that Lean implementations have failed in the past e. g. due to a lack of understanding of the concepts and inadequately taken implementation approaches. In addition, Lean should not be considered as a “short term project to boost efficiency” that ends at a specific point in time. That would be wrong. Lean is also no pure methodology toolbox and cannot be implemented by simply applying or even copying methods from one company to another. Lean is not just “something for the production”. It has to be considered as a cultural change enabler that must be introduced holistically and carefully specifically for and throughout the organisation (Dennis, 2010). That means, the specific Lean approach needs to fit the company’s culture and it also needs to fit into the SC strategy.

Furthermore, the success of Lean depends on well-trained people, it requires a new type of management and leadership (no culture of blaming; respect for people; concept of continuous improvement…). A common failure factor is the non-involvement of people in the Lean journey, which may lead to non-acceptance and absence of commitment (Mann, 2014; Liker and Trachilis, 2016). Hence, for the Lean implementation to be successful, both management and employees need to be willing, convinced and enabled to adopt it. It can be concluded, that it is essential to have adequate change management and good communication strategies in place.

3.3 Prerequisites for Industry 4.0 implementations

The implementation of carefully selected digital technologies plays an important role for the effective elevation of digital Lean in SCM (Cagnetti et al. 2021). By selecting the right technology for the right Lean process, companies can significantly increase their improvement potential and thus leave the Lean plateau (Tsipoulanidis, 2019; Ivanov et al. 2021). It needs to be emphasized, that before focusing on the implementation of digital technology, the respective transformation processes must have been carefully analysed and improved (one should avoid the term optimized). The relevant processes need to be prepared for the technology implementation: They need to be stable / robust, waste-free, and thus efficient.

It is not a question of the number of processes to be supported by digital technology (“do not boil the ocean”), but instead to identify the ones, which offer the biggest opportunity for improvement. Connected to this, a clear vision and strategy of how to connect Lean and Industry 4.0 needs to have been shaped, formulated and communicated. This is extremely important, because if bad processes are digitized in an uncoordinated way, companies will get as a result bad digitized processes and will improve nothing. That’s why the rule is to apply Lean first and then to consider digital solutions or Industry 4.0 applications.

As Andrade (2022) pointed out, Industry 4.0 is mainly built on the concept of Cyber Physical Systems (CPS), which bridge the real and the virtual world and that the CPS allow the interaction of machines, materials, devices etc. without human supervision (Bakhtari et al. 2020). For example, Industry 4.0 (I4.0) solutions enable product customization, machine and material interconnectivity or also the collaboration among different SC parties, etc. (Dalmarco and Barros 2018). Using I4.0, companies can automate and improve traditional industrial processes and thus increase their productivity and competitiveness (Zhang et al. 2021). Similar to Lean, also the I4.0 implementation will be challenging, as many factors need to be considered beforehand.

A non-representative poll at a management conference conducted by the author in 2022 has revealed, that 59% of 23 participating German SMEs companies have started I4.0 implementations, but were facing a lot of problems and challenges and that the majority (73%) was not satisfied with their I4.0 projects. Again, this was a conference poll, no representative survey, but it supports the findings of the supervised academic research projects.

The exchange with experts has furthermore revealed, that one of the biggest mistakes that have been made in I4.0 implementations is not having a clear vision and strategy. But the vision, objectives, and strategy are necessary to lay the foundation for the I4.0 implementation - and it needs to be built on the top management support and their leadership. Additionally, the implementation of technologies without proper requirements
capturing beforehand has to be avoided and it is necessary to ensure the right digital fit for the company’s needs. The implementation of the 4.0 technology has to be feasible from the technical, economic, process and human perspective (see Stachowiak, 2022), i.e. the necessary technical infrastructure; the right and sufficient economic resources (enough budget and time, a skilled team); improved processes and high-skilled personnel to operate digital tools needs to be in place.

The exchange with experts has also shown, that proper change management needs to be practiced and the early involvement of employees serves as fundamental prerequisites for a successful 4.0 implementation. A good and recommended strategy is to run workshops with selected representatives from the side of the employees e.g. to map current production processes, to identify improvements, to define future targets and to capture technology requirements mutually. This is to mitigate another frequent failure factor or mistake, which is to neglect the work force, respectively to forget explaining to them how their roles and tasks will develop and evolve. That means, adequate communication and involvement strategies, as well as continuous training, are necessary for the successful transition towards 4.0. Follow the traditional motto of Lean: “Respect for People”. The Industry 4.0 implementation should be built on the experience of the employees, i.e. actively involving the knowledge workers for their contribution but also to carefully listen to the fears of employees! As stated beforehand, it is essential to improve the processes (step 1: Lean) before digitizing them (step 2: Industry 4.0) or companies will end up with digitized, but bad processes. However, what are the potentials?

3.4 Lean Benefits of Industry 4.0

The thesis by Surrow (2021) captured the theoretical and practical potentials of the following three Industry 4.0 technologies as focusing examples: (1) Big Data Analytics (BDA), (2) Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR and VR), and (3) the usage of Cobots, related to the Lean wastes.

Regarding BDA, applications such as production layout optimization, automated quality control, automated production planning or predictive maintenance were presented in the thesis. Surrow (2021) highlighted, that the three selected applications may positively contribute to the reduction of all Lean wastes, except over-production (Kaestle et al. 2017; Hatiboglu et al. 2019). The required time for production planning might be reduced by more than 95% due to BDA, which means that the Lean waste of over-processing could be significantly reduced. Another use case discussed the potential of predictive maintenance (PM), in which a 30% reduction of defects and “ultimately reducing indirect material waste by 90% over the 12-month period (Uptake 2020, p. 3)”. Furthermore, predictive maintenance may reduce potential machine downtimes by up to 20% leading to a reduction of waiting times (McKinsey 2017).

The AR and VR technologies can be used for trainings (the author participated in a logistics training supported by VR) and the simulation of workstations and production ramp-ups (Porter and Heppelmann, 2018; Freyer 2020; Runde 2020; BITKOM 2021). This speeds up the learning curve. Furthermore, AR is often used to support the working person throughout his/her activities by displaying relevant information (that means by enriching the real environment by virtual additional information), but it also includes the possibility to record procedures (Gorecky et al. 2014; Wollenhaupt 2016; Adelmann 2020). Thus, AR / VR is assumed to be positively affecting all lean wastes, except over-production. Regarding further quantitative potentials, one can refer to the company Ford, who was able to reduce ergonomic issues by 90% and injury rate by 70%, posing a contribution to the lean wastes of “motion and movement” (Ford 2015). While AGCO reduced rework by 90%, Boeing achieved a 90% improvement of first-time quality (TeamViewer n. y.; Boeing 2018). Both cases can be linked to the avoidance of the lean waste “defects”. Moreover, GE reported a case that shows a reduction of training time by more than 50% (Kloberdanz 2018). As this refers to the required time of employees to be productive, it can be considered as elimination of “waiting” or better using “knowledge”. As third Industry 4.0 technology, Cobots were investigated by Surrow (2021). Their primary usage can for example be seen in assembling, palletizing and machine tending. The use case presented by Universal Robots highlights a positive contribution to the reduction of the lean waste “defects” of 80% (Universal Robots, 2021). Besides the practical potentials, safety plays an enormously important role.

Stachowiak (2022) critically assessed the implementation of 4.0 technology with the specific focus on smart warehousing and elaborated the success and failure factors. Furthermore, she developed a structured approach with multiple steps (Stachowiak, 2022, p. 44) as implementation checklist:
1. Target Definition
2. Analysis of Status Quo
3. Feasibility Study of Smart Solution / Technology
4. Validation of Requirements
5. Concept Creation / Use Cases
6. Implementation

3.5 Necessary Steps for Industry 5.0 implementations

The remaining question is related to the rather new term “Industry 5.0”. So far, limited literature about this topic exists, and in practice, not many experts have knowledge about I5.0. Andrade (2022) researched, that the experts recommend that I4.0 needs to be fully implemented before introducing a new concept like I5.0. The academic research among the 13 interview partners has further shown, that the term Industry 5.0 is discussed controversially (is it really the 5th industrial revolution or is it just an evolution of Industry 4.0?). This could be a question for further research.

It is clear, that I5.0 is a new and visionary concept that prioritizes the three characteristics: human, social, and ecological values in addition to the mainly technological or industrial perspectives of I4.0 (Frederico 2021). Hence, the objective of I5.0 is to enhance the I4.0's highly technological focus by increasing the human-machine interaction/cooperation and incorporating environmental/resilient aspects into industrial processes (Fraga-Lamas et al. 2021). In other words, to deploy I5.0, current I4.0 strategies must also focus on the human being, resilience and environment. Accordingly, well-thought-out change management, leadership, and communication strategies will be required to engage employees, inform them about their future (changing) job roles and activities, and establish a culture of trust.

I5.0 will change people's traditional jobs by introducing digital technology or (autonomous) machines that interact with humans. Therefore, companies will need to have digitally high-skilled personnel, which needs to be recruited or to be developed. I. e. the firms will need to provide ongoing training, run development and up-skilling initiatives, and cover aspects such as safety, governance, ethics, etc.

Industry 5.0 might even lead to the development of new business models, when existing value adding networks and industry knowledge is combined with state of the art technology to find answers for mega-trends such as climate change or environmental services: For example when traditional chimney sweepers will turn to become “heating-technology, energy-saving and emission-reduction consultants.” Jobs that are traditionally highly repetitive (e. g. scanning, booking, manual data input…) will be supported by technology or software robots often referred to as Robotic Process Automation, RPA (see for example Das, 2019; Knotte et al., 2020; Cheema, 2022). Future jobs will to a high degree be connected to the programming, maintenance and control of the digital devices that are used.

A holistic digital maturity model, which integrates the key elements for assessing Industry 4.0 readiness, forms the basis for the implementation of advanced technologies (Sony and Naik 2019). Since the latter have different stages of intelligence, implementation complexity varies depending on the digital application or system (Qin et al. 2016). Literature neglected, how companies can build a solid baseline for the implementation of Industry 5.0. According to Reif (2021, p. 38), it is needed to have a common digital strategy and culture. Without it, it is difficult to achieve an equal companywide digital maturity, but this is crucial for the successful implementation of digital tools. “Especially when a company aims to implement a cross-department digital system, data availability and data harmonization are highly important. As an agile company structure leads to quicker decision-making processes and better communication flows, the organizational setting is highly relevant for extensive digitalization projects (Reif, 2021, p. 38).” In her academic work, Reif presented four relevant pillars for the implementation of Industry 5.0, that “shall be manifested at an enterprise before proceeding with the implementation of Industry 5.0.”.

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5 In a panel discussion at a management conference in June 2022, the new role of “digital maintenance worker” was presented, highlighting that existing operational roles will shift towards digital process knowledge.

According to Reif (2021), the four basic elements for implementing Industry 5.0 are:

- Digital Strategy and Culture,
- Agile Company Structure
- Data Harmonization and Data Lakes
- Equal Company Wide Digital Maturity

Related to it, also success and failure factors have been scientifically elaborated (compare Reif, 2021, p. 39–45), which are summarized here: The five most important success factors, which enable a company to successfully transform towards a digitalized company and to achieve a high degree of efficiency enabled by new technologies and skilled employees.

1. The **purpose and business case** must be clear and properly evaluated before starting a digitalization project.
2. In addition, enterprises should follow an **agile project management** approach, which should allow the implementation of a piloting case or demonstrator.
3. Regular **information and feedback meetings** support a good internal communication.
4. A **holistic change management** approach with the focus on enabling the employees to use a new technology leads to higher user acceptance and satisfaction. Moreover, employees are less afraid of losing their jobs when they are involved in the process.
5. Lastly, the **employees shall be involved** at early stages of the digitalization projects and during the whole digital transformation and implementation process. The humans play a crucial role:

As Industry 5.0 aims to transform enterprises into digitally mature and human-centric organizations, the employees need to be the focus of the I5.0 implementation framework.

### 4 Conclusion and Outlook

It was shown that the principles of Lean Management, Industry 4.0, and Industry 5.0 conceptually complement each other. Industry 5.0 uses the known technologies of Industry 4.0, thus the practical examples demonstrated the significant potential for the elimination of lean wastes while being human-centric, ecologically oriented and resilience aware at the same time. As a result, Lean Management tools, Industry 4.0 technologies, and the three Industry 5.0 principles can be successfully connected in order to strive for “Industry 5.0 Excellence”. Due to the significant potentials of Industry 4.0 technologies and their contribution to operational excellence, companies must identify specific use cases for Industry 4.0 technologies that fit their operational needs to maintain or enhance their competitiveness.

The conclusion is: Do not digitalize everything, do not implement all possible technologies, just because the technology is there or there is a related “digital or technological hype”. First, evaluate the value adding processes, identify the problems and prioritise, craft the big picture, improve small projects without technology. Then try to identify the technology that further mitigates the problem and that fits into the big picture.

Business experts clearly stated, that “mega-projects” would not be leading to success. They clearly stated that with too many projects and no structure, there is the very high risk to get “bogged down” or “being lost in too many projects”. In summary, the I4.0 implementation will fail. According to Surrow (2021) and Reif (2021), for a successful implementation, the workforce as well as the worker participation should be involved. Besides the investment in technologies, investments in qualification and training of the workforce is required (Andrade 2022).

Otherwise, the applied technologies will not unfold their full potential. Industry 4.0 is perceived to be strongly technology driven and I 5.0 is connecting the human being, resilience and sustainability next to it. As a European idea, Industry 5.0 might provide an orientation framework for European firms, particularly in countries that lack worker participation. The needed focus of I 5.0 on the other two aspects (resilience and sustainability), became evident in the light of climate change and the implications of the corona pandemic or geo-political turbulences on global supply chains.

Of course, the number of considered academic theses, the sample size of experts, the discussions with managers at conferences or the polls conducted were not representative and the exchange was primarily conducted with German interview partners and with experts of companies from various industries with different digital maturity levels. The same is true for the limited technology use cases and application examples considered. As a result, the presented findings need to be considered as practical indications with its known limitations. To mitigate these limitations, quantitative research on the potentials of Industry 4.0 technologies may be conducted. In addition, the influence of the maturity level of companies on the measurable potential of Industry 4.0.
technologies could be researched. In addition, Industry 5.0 as a new concept should be further investigated (is it I5.0 or just the adaptation of I4.0?). It could be researched, if companies already take measures to develop I4.0 further to cover the three main characteristics (human, resilience, sustainability) of I 5.0.

In conclusion, when implementing Lean, I4.0, or I5.0, it is important…

- To have a **clear vision and strategy** fully supported by the **top management**.
- To develop the **big picture** (with its small elements), but also to design a solid **change management and communication strategy**.
- To **involve the people from the very beginning**, and ensure they have the necessary **skills** and competencies.
- To get the **value adding foundations** (process de-wasting) **right before** introducing new technologies.
- To understand the reasons why **processes are improved, reworked**, new business opportunities assessed and relevant **technology is being evaluated and implemented**.
- To have the necessary **monetary, time and staffing capacities**.
- To remain **innovative, open, and continuously improving**.
- To work on **small projects**, that might cover a **time-horizon of 6 months to keep flexibility** in case of new challenges that require adjustments.

Finally, this list of bullet points above shall serve as inspiration to use digital technology in connection with a Lean Thinking in order to meet the fundamental expectations of Marketing.

Or in other words: **Within this paper, the identified knowledge gap in section 2 has been closed and indications were presented, how Lean and Industry 4.0 / 5.0 can help Marketing to create customer value and to deliver customer satisfaction efficiently.**

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Marketing and logistics integration. Results of an empirical analysis

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Introduction
Supply chain integration is divided into two dimensions, namely internal integration and external integration. Internal integration refers to cross-functional collaborative processes within the company. External integration consists of the integration of suppliers, the integration of customers and logistics service providers. Sometimes external integration works best if the company has good internal integration. On the other hand, the lack of internal integration is the cause of external integration and the realization of the supply chain. For this reason, the present work aims to investigate the integration between two fundamental functions: logistics and marketing. Both are strategic because their performance directly affects customer satisfaction. Studies investigating this relationship are still limited in number. Therefore, this document aims to examine whether functions share information on processes such as new product development, package redesign, promotions and product returns. The literature, in fact, highlights that the lack of integration leads to an increase in operating, inventory management and transport costs. Through an online questionnaire, this paper analyzes the state of the art in 83 Italian companies. The results confirm the low rate of integration between logistics and marketing not only in small and medium-sized enterprises but also in large companies.

Internal and external integration
For years, literature has underlined the importance of creating supply chains able to react in front of increasingly dynamic and unpredictable markets. Supply chain allows information to flow in real time among various players from upstream (manufacturers) to downstream (consumer) and vice versa, allowing agile and resilient systems. In reality, companies are not very integrated, probably due to perceived switching costs, investments need to adopt new technologies, and dimensions. The main issue of supply chain management is how to coordinate the independent players, so that they work together as a unit. In fact, the concept of SCM integration does not come without problems. First of all, academic literature provides little empirical evidence of integration of supply chains (Fawcett and Magnan, 2002; Vepsalainen, 2003; Fabbe-Costes and Jahre, 2008; Payaro and Papa, 2019). Lambert et al. (1998), for example, found no empirical evidence of supply chains that were linked from the initial source of supply to the end-customer. In practice, Similarly Bagchi et al. (2005) did not find evidence of companies that have established close integration with supply chain partners. Fabbe-Costes and Jahre (2008) found only few studies that focus on an extended scope of integration. Mejza and Wisner (2001) concluded that while studies suggest a wide scope of coordinated processes across supply chains, there is little empirical evidence that confirm these claims. The main goal of supply chain management is how to coordinate the independent players, so that they work together as a unit, in the pursuit of the common goal in changing market conditions. The connection started from suppliers gets to consumers and involves human resources and all the information inside the business. However, this concept sometime is true on large companies, but if differs in small and medium enterprises (SME). In SMEs scale, the small scope of business becomes the main threat, so it’s difficult to create and maintain connections with suppliers or consumers. In some geographical area SME represent the majority of companies. In Italy, for example, 99% of enterprises has less than 250 employees, 95% has less than 9 employees (ISTAT, 2019). Integration, which can also be described as the development of collaborative or shared strategies, has not yet been achieved in the early stages. Companies that provide portable devices and mobile Internet connections for work purposes workers are only 64% (ISTAT, 2019). Moreover, lack of internal integration is also undermining the establishment of integrated chains. While external integration examines integration that occurs between organizations, internal integration examines integration across various parts of a single organization (Pagell, 2004; Wong et al., 2013).

Supply chain management enhances the competitiveness of companies by integrating their internal functions and linkages with the external operations of their customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders. This can lead to
better performance in terms of cost, time, flexibility, and quality (Kim 2009). SMEs lack of external integration is sometimes the consequence of lack of internal integration. The classic functional structure, in fact, creates microsystems that communicate little, such as marketing and logistics functions. For over a decade, authors such as Borghesi (2006) and Christopher (2003) have been stressing the need for strong coordination in order to meet the customer's needs.

Today the lack of internal integration is visible within companies. This paper would to analyze the existence of structured internal relationships between marketing and logistics. The study is developed in collaboration with the AISM – Associazione Italiana Sviluppo Marketing (Italian Marketing Development Association) through a questionnaire distributed on a Web open platform. Results highlight the scarce integration in particular during crucial phases such as the development of a new product or the re-design of packaging. Two functions do not seem to cooperate and share data and information even on the occasion of returns, or when company decides to launch a new promotional campaign. Taking up the recommendations published in previous literature (Morris and Craig, 2005; Ruekert and Walker, 1987), cost control and environmental sustainability is possible if and only if the promotion and launch strategies of a product are carried out in close relationship with those who will have to store and to move the goods to the point of consumption (and sometime from the point of consumption to the recovery points like in the execution of reverse logistics).

Marketing and logistics relationships

Logistics and marketing are linked through the distribution element of the marketing mix i.e. one of the four “P’s”. (E.g. Mentzer et al 2000; Svensson 2003). Similarly, logistics contributes to customer service, a critical element of the marketing concept (Murphy and Poist, 1996). Problems of integration are evident when a company’s internal functions operate like functional “silos” rather than working together to meet the needs of the customer (Ballantyne, 2000, Min and Mentzer, 2000, Stank et al 1999, Morash et al. 1997). In this way company performance and its competitive advantage are weakened.

Logistics operations are responsible for the efficient and effective flow of firm’s products. Main goals of logistics operations are to minimize costs, to improve customer service and to create a competitive advantage (Christopher, 2006). Logistics interacts with a different areas within an organization, such as manufacturing processes, marketing, procurement, and human resource management (Coyle et al., 1992). Hence, logistics addresses the demand supply activities to fulfill the demand (Lambert and Cook, 1990).

Warehousing and distribution are critical to the successful marketing of products.; 7 rights explain this importance: getting the right product, in the right quantity, in the right condition, at the right place, at the right time, to the right customer, at the right price (The Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport UK, 2019). Empirical research indicates that marketing’s interfunctional integration is positively related to a variety of business performance indicators such as departmental performance, company performance, and psychosocial outcomes such as satisfaction in working with other departments (Kahn, 1996).

If literature demonstrates a positive effect of internal integration between logistics and marketing, practitioners put in evidence the lack of coordination. A growing attention to the enhancement of inter-functional skills and the development of technical-managerial supports allow greater sharing of information among various organizational levels.

Logistics and marketing develop processes targeted to customers satisfaction. To reach this goal, functions must share information and develop collaborative behaviour during the following activities:

- research & development (Lynch and Whicker, 2008)
- demand management (Christopher M., 2007)
- sales forecasts (Madhani 2012);
- order and warehouse management (Andelković A., Radosavljević M., 2018);
- packaging design (Vernuccio et al. 2010);
- shipping and distribution (Pogila et al., 2019);
- after-sales services (returns) (Mollenkopf at al., 2007)

Two functions cannot be independent but must be synergic up to the drafting of common strategies. Christopher says marketing and logistics are similar because they both participate in a process of adapting the offer to the customer’s needs. They are complementary because marketing stimulates demand, logistics satisfies it through distribution processes. From the above considerations, there is the need for concrete integration where marketing analyses, identifies and tries to meet the demand, while logistics optimizes and makes available to the market company’s goods.

Customer satisfaction can be achieved through coordinated marketing activities related to product, price, promotion and distribution. A company can make a profit if in its business total logistics costs are minimized. Logistics costs include not only transports, but also order management, storage, picking, packing, as well as information technologies (IT) management responsible of real time flow of data among integrated subjects. This
model is well expressed by the representation proposed by Ciesielski (1999), where author extend McCarthy’s model of the 4Ps (1960).

It is widely recognized that companies compete not only for what they do (product), but for how they do it (process) (Christopher, 2003). In other words, the management and market alignment of business processes are important as the quality of the product or its price. Processes that allow to satisfy the demand in a more reactive and reliable way are fundamental to achieve success on the market. Responsiveness, reliability, and relationships are the basis of relationships among logistics and marketing. The goal is to manage the interface among functions in order to align their respective strategies within the context of the wider supply chain (Morris and Carter, 2005).

This paper suggests to complete Ciesielski representation by considering an extension of the contact points between logistics and marketing. The proposal is to consider two points of contact, the placement and the product. Nickels and Jolson (1976) introduced packaging as the fifth “P” in the marketing mix, underlining its importance in marketing. Madhani (2017) states that the five Ps of the marketing mix are a useful tool when discussing the interface and interaction between logistics and marketing because they represent the main causes of conflict among them. Packaging can be inserted into an overlapping area called "conflict zone". If placement is the logistics process that manage the flows of materials to the point of consumption (and from consumption to the recovery points in a circular economy), product and packaging development should be done in close synergy with logistics to warrant the quality of good to the customer. The packaging, together with the brand, quality, style and technical characteristics, constitutes the good; therefore all these dimensions must be considered in the product development process (Kotler et al., 2002; Sims & Trott, 2010). An incorrect choice of primary or secondary packaging could penalize the number goods moved, with direct effects on the number of vehicles needed, therefore with a direct environmental impact (more vehicles is equivalent to more pollution). This paper would to investigate the existence of a relationship between marketing and logistics in the development phases of a product or packaging.
Supply chain optimization depends on the ability to organize and optimize physical and information flows. More information management represents in real time the market conditions and more company is efficient and flexible. If marketing does not communicate new strategies or promotional events to logistics, logistics is not able to adapt fulfilment process. For this reason, the paper analyses the existence of following issues:

- Every promotion is not communicated to logistics in advance, so logistics is not able to prepare spaces and resources.
- Every promotional material (i.e. displays) is not studied through the collaboration of marketing and logistics, so it require more resources to store and to transport.
- Products are not studied to reduce, if possible, volume and weight, so more trucks or pallets are needed to move goods.
- Packaging is not designed to warrant the quality and the integrity of goods during all logistics phases, so storage, picking and shipment are complicated and generator of time waste and costs.

To give more details to the latest point, the survey dedicates some questions to analyse the existence of a KPI related to returns. Today companies try to define new solutions to reduce product returns, increased by 30% in the last year (Russo et al. 2020).

**Methodology**

A survey questionnaire was developed to collect information. A total of 269 companies are identified from the membership list of the AISM - Associazione Italiana Sviluppo Marketing (Italian Association Marketing development). The questionnaire were created in the open platform SurveyMonkey, then the invitations were mailed to the general manager, marketing manager, logistics manager, supply chain manager, as these target respondents were assumed to have good knowledge of the organizational characteristics. After the mailing, we recorded a total of 85 responses compiled survey, only 83 were usable. Companies belonging to different industries and sizes were considered. Through multiple choice questions, the paper investigates the relationships among marketing and logistics, in particular:

- Coordination in the decision making before the launch of new product or existence of a process flow that crosses two functions
- Interactions in product development (including packaging and display elements)
- Sharing of information about warehouse status and distribution
- Returns monitoring: number, value, and costs.

A Likert scale with 5 options was defined for the answers. After an initial screening, some questionnaires that were incomplete or incorrectly filled in were eliminated. The sample considered is 83 cases divided as follows by business turnover range and business models.
SMEs (less than 50 mln Euro) represent the majority with 67%, while 33% represents large companies. Manufacturing is prevalent with 64% followed by services (19%) (i.e. 4PL providers) and trading and distributors (17%). This distribution does not reflect the Italian situation. In Italy, SMEs represent 99.9% of the total number of companies, generating over 70% of the turnover.

In the product or packaging development process, only 1 company every 4 (12 cases answer “every time” and 14 cases answer “almost every time”) declares there is a collaboration (or a light collaboration) among different functions. These answers put in evidence the scarce internal integration. Decisions took by marketing can imply increasing costs because products or packs do not optimize transports.

Meeting among functions is neither scheduled nor formalized in the 77% of cases. Only 12% says that inter-functional meetings are periodically organized. The 80% of the 12% are represented by large companies. 16 companies say they have no planned relationships, 12 cases belong to small and medium-sized companies.

Issues presented by logistics are not considered by marketing. This happen in 52% of the sample. Only 6% declares every problem putted in evidence by logistics is considered by marketing and sometime strategies are re-defined.
A product return is defined as the process of returning a previously bought product by the buyer or current owner to its retailer or seller in the event of an occurrence of mishandling of product specifications. (Stock & Mulki, 2009). A study published in Harvard Business Review also indicated that product returns are an increasingly costly challenge for retailers (Minnema et al. 2016). Some papers estimate 5% -7% of in-store sales are returned, whereas in online sales it amounts to 20%-30%. On average, retailers expect to get back about 16.6% of the total merchandise that customers purchased in 2021, according to survey by the National Retail Federation and Appriss Retail.

Products returns are not an issue for marketing managers. The sample says marketing considers “every” return only in 11 cases. It seems reverse logistics and related costs are not a problem for marketing managers, while goods returned must be treated, checked, stored or eliminated by logistics personnel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Perc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Knowledge of product’s logistics costs by marketing

A similar distribution is the result of the following question: Do marketing and logistics collaborate to reduce lead time? Only 10 companies say “Every time”, while 39 companies assert functions “Never” or “Almost never” collaborate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Perc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Monitoring of products returns by marketing manager

From above answers, this paper tries to analyse if exit a relationship among company size and level of internal integration. The following table put in evidence the number on cases and level of integration. We suppose level of integration is:

- Low, if the majority of answers is “Never” or “Almost never”;
- Medium, if the majority of answers is “Occasionally/sometimes”;
- High, if the majority of answers is “Almost every time” or “Every time”.

With these hypothesis we draw the following table.
Levels of Integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business turnover</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 10 mln Euro</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 10 and 50 mln Euro</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 50 and 100 mln Euro</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 100 and 300 mln Euro</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 300 mln Euro</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Companies positioning

- The majority of responses record low levels of integration (total 47 cases); 37 cases belong to SMEs. In the same area there are 10 large companies.
- 22 companies stay in the medium-high level of integration area; 9 are SMEs.
- There is a number of companies (14) whose level of integration should to be considered medium. Subsequent investigations could assess whether this position is only temporary or it represents a transition towards greater inter-functional integration.

Company size seems to be a catalyst toward internal integration between marketing and logistics. It remains a large amount of large companies without a real inter-functional integration. If we consider SMEs, probably marketing function is not yet well defined in the company organization. Functional silos are still present in companies.

Conclusions

Relationships between logistics and marketing are critical to the delivery of excellent customer service and ensuring high satisfaction. Companies need to integrate two functions because firms will earn strategic positioning of the cost-efficient.

The paper highlighted that most companies still do not have processes that allow a flow of information between functions. Unfortunately, this lack leads to an increase in inefficiencies which can be summarized in the following points:

- Sales promotions are not communicated to logistics and create increasing lead time.
- Products and packaging are not designed to optimize transport.
- Promotional material and display create expensive operations management.
- Returns are more and more expensive.

The sample does not allow to use the collected data for statistical purposes, nor can the sample be defined as significant. However, the resulting message highlights how even today two functions are not integrated, causing increasing costs and reducing margins. In an increasingly dynamic market with increasingly high competitive pressure, lack of integration becomes a real threat for competitiveness.

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Road freight logistics management using network analytic approaches

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Abstract:
This study describes a methodology to support the management of road freight logistics at the national scale by use of network analytic approaches. The empirical analysis relies on the processing of origin-destination freight transport flows, based on the most recent data from the national road freight transport surveys in Greece. Among others, the problems of the optimal number and (al)location of freight transport logistics hubs and the design of efficient and sustainable road and intermodal freight transport operations at the regional unit and country levels are addressed. The origin-destination matrices for road freight transport within and between all the regional units of the country are processed and analysed to construct useful centrality indices which consider the network dimension. More specifically, the road freight transport flows are modelled as a weighted spatial network, where nodes represent the centroids of regional units, and the links refer to the trade transactions among them weighted by the volumes of transported commodities. The calculation of network indices includes the spatially weighted degree centrality and the spatial PageRank centrality at the level of node (regional unit). The network indices are properly weighted by the generalised transport cost within and between regional units. At the next step, the methodology identifies freight hub catchment (or market) areas, by use of a spatially agglomerative hierarchical clustering approach. In this approach, the proximity concerns both the topological space and the physical space, based on the cost-weighted connections between nodes. The optimal number and the location of freight logistics hubs is determined by the number of the resulting spatial clusters and the highest spatial centrality value of the nodes-regional units in each cluster, respectively. The methodology used here can be further extended by use of a multi-criteria approach to account several other criteria, such as financing, operational, environmental and other considerations.

Keywords: Road freight, transport management, logistics, network analysis, hub location.

Introduction
The location-allocation of freight transportation hubs is regarded as one of the most computationally challenging and important problems in the field of transportation-logistics. Among others, the optimal allocation of logistics hubs can affect the efficiency, sustainability and cost-effectiveness of freight transportation operations in a country. This study considers the given problem for the development of a freight logistics hub network in Greece. It extends previous research in the field (Tsekeris, 2016) by several directions. First, it explicitly incorporates the spatial dimension, similar to the development of network models with spatial dependence for other types of transportation modes (Hazan, 2020). In contrast with the simplistic use of distance to represent transportation costs, the generalized transportation cost between all prefecture units of the country is calculated.

Suitable centrality measures which have been proved as effective to capture the accessibility of firms and regions to trade markets are employed and properly adjusted to consider both the topological and the spatial structure of the road freight transportation network. A unique dataset originating from the most recent road freight transportation survey (in 2019) in Greece is used, based on which origin-destination (O-D) road freight transportation flows within and among 53 regional units (at the NUTS-3 level) of the country are represented by a directed spatially weighted network, in order to incorporate the spatial effects in an accurate manner. The designation of alternative freight hub catchment (or market) areas is examined here for different (national and/or international) O-D freight trip matrices and by considering both classical and community-aware centrality measures, so that disentangle the role of each node-region in both the short- and long-haul transportation. In turn, suitable recommendations can be made about the typologies of freight logistics centres as of regional and national scope.
Methodology

Centrality indices

The methodology involves two main steps. The first one includes the calculation of two spatial centrality measures, denoting the connectivity and accessibility/hubness of each node in the network:

The Spatially Weighted Degree Centrality (SWDC) of node (regional unit) i is given as:

\[
SWDC_i = \frac{sd_{in}^i + sd_{out}^i}{\sum_j (sd_{in}^j + sd_{out}^j)},
\]

where \(sd_{in}^i = \sum_i w_{ij} a_{ij} c_{ij}^{-\sigma}\) is the column degree (in-degree) of node i, and \(sd_{out}^i = \sum_j w_{ij} a_{ij} c_{ij}^{-\sigma}\) is the row degree (out-degree) of node i. The element \(a_{ij}\) is the entry in the adjacency matrix A of network G weighted by the freight volumes \(w_{ij}\) and the transport cost \(c_{ij}\), where \(\sigma\) is a spatial decay parameter, denoting how much regional centrality attenuates with transportation cost from the origin region i (typically the decay parameter is set \(\sigma=1\)). Hence, the SWDC weighs links by the size of freight demand (proxied by volume in tonnes) in each origin i and destination j and inversely proportional to the cost \(c_{ij}\) between i-j pair. The SWDC is compared to the total Weighted Degree Centrality (WDC) which provides the aspatial measure of strength of node (regional unit) i.

The Spatial PageRank Centrality (SPC) of node (regional unit) i is fundamentally based on the Google search index of PageRank (Brin and Page, 1998) for extracting information about important Internet nodes and link structures. It offers here a generalized measure of the eigenvector centrality on the scaled spatially weighted network. This measure shows the ability of a node to attract flows (be accessible) from many other nodes and function as a hub (distribute flows to many others high in-centrality nodes), accounting for the spatial effects and both the centrality and intermediacy of regional units. It is compared with the aspatial version of the PageRank Centrality for this network.

Designation of freight hub catchment areas

The second step of the methodology refers to identifying the freight hub catchment (or market) areas, by use of a spatially agglomerative hierarchical clustering approach. In this approach, the proximity concerns both the topological space and the physical space, based on the cost-weighted connections between nodes. Clusters are designated by the geographical concentration of freight flows into broad, functionally integrated groups of regional units. The Newman’s method (Clauset et al., 2004) of modularity optimisation for (freight) community detection is implemented (other methods, such as the Leiden algorithm, were found to produce similar grouping results). Specifically, the measure of modularity to be maximised is expressed as:

\[
Q = (1/2m) \sum_{ij} [w_{ij} - (s_is_j/2m)] \delta(g_i, g_j),
\]

where \(w_{ij}\) denotes the weight of the link between nodes-regional units i and j, \(s_i = \sum_j w_{ij}\) and \(s_j = \sum_i w_{ij}\) are the weight sums of the links attached to i and j, respectively, \(g_i\) and \(g_j\) are the communities (clusters) to which nodes i and j are assigned, \(\delta\) function is 1 if \(g_i=g_j\) and 0 otherwise, and \(m = (1/2) \sum_{ij} w_{ij}\). Provided that flow clustering is a data-driven process, it does not force a contiguous clustering and it circumvents a priori constraints typically made in spatial econometrics about the physical distance among constituent regions. The optimal number and the location of freight logistics hubs is determined by the number of the resulting spatial clusters and the highest spatial centrality value of the nodes-regional units in each cluster, respectively.

Estimation of generalized transportation cost

The network distances and free-flow travel times are obtained from the database of the national transportation model of the Greek Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation. Current travel times are obtained by the country-wide traffic simulation-based assignment of the O-D trip demand at the municipal level and aggregated at the regional unit level, accounting for capacity constraints and congestion effects. The O-D transportation costs (€) are estimated by the summation of the products of network distances and travel times with the corresponding coefficients of kilometer-cost (€/km) and time-cost (€/hour), obtained from the EC-JRC transportation cost database for the Greek regions.
Results
The results of the SWDC and the SPC suggest the increased influence of large metropolitan areas (of Attiki and Thessaloniki) on the road freight network and the distribution of regional centralities, compared to the more even (or less concentrated) distribution of regional centralities when using the aspatial measures (Figure 1). Especially the SPC suggests the existence of more intense core-periphery disparities in the operations of the freight transport industry. It is noted that the results shown here include both the national and the import-export freight flows entering and exiting the country by road and by ferry and Ro-Ro shipping at the national ports and international sea gateways.

![Figure 1](image1.png)

*Figure 1* Results of the weighted degree centrality (a) without and (b) with spatial effects and the PageRank centrality (c) without and (d) with spatial effects.

Furthermore, the use of clustering with spatial effects results in more freight hubs and associated market-catchment areas, i.e., 5, compared to 4 when ignoring spatial effects (Figure 2). In both cases, there is a significant degree of regional integration of road freight flows across the country, around large metropolitan areas and/or major freight transportation hubs, i.e., Athens-Piraeus, Thessaloniki, Patras and Igoumenitsa (sea gateways), Sterea Ellada, especially, Viotia (which includes a major industrial area in proximity to Attiki), and Heraklion (the capital city of Kriti). Community-aware measures, such as the ratio of external to internal links and the modularity vitality index, are also calculated to examine the structural features of freight hub catchment areas. The community vitality measures each node’s contribution to community structure by taking the difference of a network partition’s modularity and that of the network partition if the node were to be removed. It is shown that the clustering of the spatially weighted network leads to increased modularity, compared to the clustering which ignores spatial dependences. Hence, it yields higher efficiency and robustness for the designated freight market areas, as a shock or disturbance in a particular freight market area does not significantly affect freight transportation operations in the other market areas and components of the system. Besides, the clustering of the spatially weighted network produces freight market areas which are more hierarchical, as there are stronger “community hubs”, while the number of regional units-nodes acting as
“community-bridges” increases. Therefore, it raises the need for investment to provide additional redundancy and enhance the capacity of the system to treat possible congestion effects within freight market areas and promote the resilience of the whole network.

Figure 2 Estimated freight catchment areas (a) without and (b) with spatial effects

Conclusions
The results signify the importance of accounting for spatial effects on determining the number and location of key nodes in the freight logistics hub network. These effects, which are represented through the calculation of the O-D generalized transportation cost that weighs centrality indices, reflect significant interregional transportation cost differences and reveal the reliance of the spatial economy on the large metropolitan centers. The results can be further examined by considering alternative scenarios to road network improvements and cost changes (e.g., increases in fuel prices and toll charges). They can also be specialised by considering categories of (industrial) commodities and sets of regional units. Last, the suggested approach can be extended to a multi-criteria hub spatial allocation problem to additionally account for a wide range of operational (level-of-service), financial/economic, social and geographical/accessibility criteria pertaining to each regional unit. The suggested analyses can support the resource planning and marketing strategies of logistics firms with respect to the management and location of their warehousing facilities or distribution centres at the local, regional and national scales.

Acknowledgement
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References:
Tourism Marketing and Management
Segmentation of visitors to Crete based on their gastronomic motivation

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Abstract:  
Over the last decade, the use and significance of food and gastronomy as a motivating factor to attract visitors to a particular destination has received considerable attention in the literature. Either as a case study, or as part of a research study, food and gastro tourism has been a very popular tourism destination marketing strategy. Following on these steps, the Region of Crete has, over the last 5 to 10 years, started to implement a tourism marketing campaign based on the region’s strong food and gastronomic tradition (focusing and building on the traditional ‘Cretan diet’ and the island’s diverse culinary culture). At the same time, driven by the same forces, local entrepreneurs have also started to develop the food and gastronomic identity of the island by focusing more on the development of unique and innovative food and gastronomic tourism experiences.

Hence, as the involvement with local food and gastronomy has started to rise (from both tourism practitioners, entrepreneurs, as well as local and regional authority policy makers), segmentation of visitors based on their food and gastronomic motivation for visiting Crete, should provide useful information and feedback to be used for policy making in the area. In order to do so, the current study identifies past visitors to Crete, according to their food and gastronomic motivation for visiting the island. The study utilized a study of 2144 respondents on a primary, quantitative based survey that was completed in 2021.

Survey participants were divided into three categories, depending on their responses to a question enquiring about their food and gastronomic motivation behind their last visit to Crete. According to their responses they were grouped into “low”, “medium” and “highly” motivated gastronomic tourists. Following respondents’ categorization according to their food and gastronomic motivation, the study focused on identifying differences and similarities among those three groups of visitors. Differences and similarities were examined in terms of their socio-demographic profile, previous visits to Crete, generic tourism behavioural patterns, motivation about food and gastronomy in general, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions about Crete as a gastronomic destination.

The empirical results indicate that there are statistically significant differences among the three groups of visitors in terms of their socio-demographic profile. In addition, respondents seem to differ in terms of their generic tourism behavioral patterns. On the other hand, there are no statistically significant differences among respondents regarding their future visitation patterns to Crete. The paper concludes with the identification of relevant managerial and marketing policy making initiatives drawn from the discussion above.

Keywords: Crete, Segmentation, Food tourism, Gastronomy
Privacy versus safety considerations for international tourists in Greece. A choice modelling experiment

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Abstract:
Issues pertaining to safety levels during one’s travel have recently caught public attention. On the one hand, the issue of international terrorism activity that has plagued tourism for the majority of the last decade. On the other hand, the recent pandemic increased tourists’ awareness surrounding personal safety and security issues and has left tourism activity almost at a standstill. However, heightened safety concerns impose, most of the times, an unnecessary opportunity cost towards individual privacy levels. The current paper examines respondents’ preferences for the trade-off between privacy and safety considerations within a tourism perspective.

Methodologically, the study employs a stated preferences discrete choice methodology (SPDCM) to evaluate a number of policy initiatives implemented at a major international airport in Greece. The study utilised a number of attributes to describe future policy initiatives aimed at improving security protocols for tourists and travelers. Furthermore, each policy attribute is decomposed into a number of levels, where each level represents alternative policy manifestations (representing either an improvement or an impairment) from the status quo. The SPDCM experiment was carried out in 2021, in person and was distributed to 500 individual tourists in Crete. The study utilises a binomial logit model to evaluate individual preferences for future and / or hypothetical security policy initiatives.

The choice modelling experiment revealed a number of interesting findings. First, the price/cost coefficient is negative and statistically significant. This is a basic requirement for the implementation of the choice experiment and the calculations regarding marginal willingness to pay (WtP) estimates at a later stage. At the simplest, this finding confirms that respondents dislike paying a security surcharge for security measures (Patil et al. 2014). Second, respondents expressed positive and statistically significant preferences for a number of policy initiatives. More specifically, the empirical findings indicate that respondents perceive the use of security technology as a necessity for their own safety and security during their travel. It is of note that they expressed strong negative and statistically significant opinions regarding a possible deterioration in security levels through the absence of security cameras at airports. This represents a significant departure from the evidence presented elsewhere in the literature (Patil et al. 2016). We attribute this partly to higher uncertainty and the turbulent times prevailing nowadays.

Third, it appears that there is a gradation of travellers’ responses regarding security personnel policies. Based on the empirical findings individuals seem to respond in a positive way to tighter but less intrusive security policies (i.e., combined presence of airport security personnel and airport police), but rather negatively towards even more tight and more intrusive security policies within airports (i.e., combined presence of airport security personnel and military personnel). Interestingly though, respondents were very positive as far as the widest possible disclosure of information regarding malicious activity or individuals, to all police department worldwide.

Finally, the evidence regarding the impact of time to clear security checks and security personnel in operation at security posts, the information is contrasting, revealing individuals’ contrasting perceptions and priorities. On the one hand, respondents expressed positive preferences towards a (20%) increase of security personnel at security posts. On the other hand, they expressed negative and statistically significant preferences towards a
(33%) increase in the time required to go through security checks at airports. Combined, the abovementioned two findings indicate that respondents were particularly conscious about time delays that may be caused at airports as a result of heightened security protocols and measures. In this case, the addition of an extra person at the security check post is perceived in a favourable way because respondents perceive this as a time saving initiative.

**Key words:** Choice modelling, safety, security, Crete, preferences

**References:**

**Table 1: Conditional Logit Model**

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<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
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<th>t-statistic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Airport security personnel and airport police</td>
<td>0.262*</td>
<td>(2.44)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Airport security personnel only</td>
<td>0 (.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport security personnel and undercover police</td>
<td>0.164</td>
<td>(1.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Airport security personnel and military personnel</strong></td>
<td>-0.383***</td>
<td>(-3.43)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>No cameras</strong></td>
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<td>(-5.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard CCTV cameras</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Smart Cameras</strong></td>
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<td>(2.11)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cameras capturing Biometric info</strong></td>
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<td>(2.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random pat - down of people and luggage</td>
<td>0.0799</td>
<td>(0.73)</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>European passenger recording system</td>
<td>0.128</td>
<td>(1.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal biometrics card</td>
<td>0.167</td>
<td>(1.53)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No delays</td>
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<td>(1.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0 (.</td>
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<td>10 minutes to go through security checks</td>
<td>-0.0308</td>
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<td><strong>15 minutes to go through security checks</strong></td>
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<td>(1.37)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5 persons</strong></td>
<td>0.309**</td>
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<td>6 persons</td>
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<td>(1.17)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SECURITY SURCHARGE</strong></td>
<td>-0.0185*</td>
<td>(-2.19)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations | 3000

Adjusted R²

* t statistics in parentheses  
  * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001
Collecting travelling experiences: A new travelling mindset and the role of ICTs. An Extended Abstract

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1. Introduction

New advancements in information and communications technology (ICT) have completely transformed the global tourism landscape (Kumar et al., 2019). New practices in distribution channels (Berne et al., 2015), more sophisticated tourism yield management techniques (Ramos & Rodrigues, 2013), new collaborative consumption tourism platforms (Gössling & Hall, 2019) and an increased emphasis in developing smart tourism destinations (Wang et al., 2016) are just a few of the significant changes that have occurred in the past few years. These drastic changes have enabled four new seemingly unrelated tourism practices with important implications for the well-being of travellers and the sustainability of visited destinations. The first is the rapid adoption of bucket-list tourism, in which travellers create lists of desirable tourism destinations (Thurnell-Read, 2017). The widespread emergence of books, articles and websites cataloguing the ‘top-100 cities to visit’ or ‘top-10 most beautiful lakes’ has also sparked this adoption. Second, social media has glorified tourism and increased mobility (Gössling, 2017), sending people around the globe hunting for the most likeable and shareable photos with the aim to post appealing content online (Dedeoğlu, Taheri, & Gannon, 2020). As such, many travellers now look for the most exciting, unique and extraordinary places to visit so that they can share their experiences online (Varnajot, 2019). Third, the emergence of dedicated sites, Facebook groups and sharing platforms (e.g. couchsurfing) has brought together like-minded people and created a sense of community around authentic, responsible and sustainable tourism (Lee, Reid & Kim, 2014) Finally, websites such as Most Traveled People, Nomad Mania and Country Counter have enabled competitive tourism in which visits to destinations are listed, enumerated and turned into points to compare with other travellers on the sites’ leader boards. Several other ICT platforms, such as review sites and frequent-flier programmes, have also enhanced this latter phenomenon (Gössling, 2017).

This study aims to bring together these and other distinct tourism behaviours that have emerged from recent changes in ICT and makes a contribution by arguing for the need for a more holistic exploration of these new travelling practices. We conceptualise a distinct group of frequent travellers not as tourists but as collectors of travelling experiences motivated by the desire to add unique items (i.e. destinations) to their collection and enabled by new advancements in ICT. Collecting is a process that involves acquiring, possessing and bringing together objects to construct a subjective world (Baudrillard, 1994) and is associated with many tangible items, such as music albums and sport cards (Holbrook, 1987; Martin & Baker, 1996), and intangible experiences, such as going to concerts and visiting restaurants (Belk et al., 1988; Keinan and Kivetz, 2011). Studies have also indicated that people collect destinations, such as cities or countries (Timothy, 1998); specific places, such as World Heritage Areas (King and Prideaux, 2009), golf courses (Baxter, 2007), ‘haunted’ places (Coulombe, 2004), stadiums, and beaches; and events and activities sets, such as “festivals, religious experiences, nature migrations or sporting events” (King and Prideaux, 2010, p. 237).

Our proposed conceptualisation helps explain the incompatibility of the tourism sector’s growth with the need to globally reduce carbon dioxide emissions (Font and McCabe, 2017) and helps answer why more people travel, more often and more far away (Gössling et al., 2013), even while sustainability concerns have increased. Moreover, it addresses the complicated nature of travellers’ well-being, which increases when tourism assuages negative feelings such as loneliness, homesickness and need for social interaction (Sabatini and Sarracino, 2017) but decreases from travel-related stress from constant social comparisons (Krasnova et al., 2013) and the fear of missing out (FOMO) (Przybylski et al., 2013). Furthermore, by treating travelling as a collecting practice and not as a leisure activity, we show that some travellers spend considerable amounts of money and effort to visit destinations only to gain bragging rights and cross destinations off their list (Kerr, Lewis & Burgess, 2012). Finally, we help alleviate the contradiction of ‘competitive’ tourism in which people aim to increase their standing in rankings but, at the same time, exchange knowledge and tips with each other to enable further travelling.
Collecting travelling experiences

Early research on collecting has identified travelling experiences as a common, though intangible, collectable (Belk et al., 1988). Specifically, many people like to collect aspects of a generally larger tourist experience (Sarmento & Lopez, 2018), specific places in the destinations they visit (Baxter, 2007) or even whole destinations (Woodside et al., 2014). This tendency has been recognized and exploited by travel agencies and trip organisers, who design and sell trips that help travellers expand their collections (King & Prideaux, 2010). According to the literature, the psychological mechanisms behind collecting experiences are equivalent to those behind collecting tangible goods and relate to individuals’ need for accomplishment, progress and self-enhancement (McIntosh & Schmeichel, 2004).

Ample evidence in extant literature supports the phenomenon of collecting destinations, places and touristic experiences. Belk (1991) explains how stamp and travel book collections can metaphorically help people ‘acquire’ other places, linking the process of collecting places to the acquisition of specific tangible objects. Other scholars have focused on visiting destinations as a form of collecting and emphasized the competitive nature of this type of collecting. For example, Timothy (1998) and Sarmento and Lopez (2018) regard collecting places as the process of counting visited destinations and actively trying to increase the number for competitive reasons. Following a different approach and focusing on the travelling aspect of the process, rather than the collecting one, tourism researchers have introduced the conceptually close notion of competitive travelling, which is a form of travelling associated with increased mobility, more frequent and shorter trips and competitive tendencies (Gössling & Stavrianidi, 2015; Gössling, 2017).

Previous work provides support for using a collecting lens in the tourism literature; our attempt treats collecting travelling experiences as a holistic process that involves a range of different motives and behaviours. We are therefore interested in going beyond the association of collecting places to the acquisition of physical items, as people do not necessarily need to travel to collect stamps, souvenirs or coins. Moreover, we acknowledge that people’s travelling experiences are deeper than the landscapes seen or the items bought and more complicated than the number of visited countries. A travelling experience includes interactions with local peoples and cultures, the activities engaged in, the feelings generated and many more dimensions (Volo, 2013). Finally, we attempt to go beyond competitive tourism, recognising that while a competitive attitude is a major motive for developing a collection of experiences (McIntosh & Schmeichel, 2004), it is not the only one. The need for connection, self-progress, gratification, memory management and sharing may also be motives.

Various researchers have highlighted the importance of ICTs for collectors as digital technologies have transformed “meaningful practices of acquisition, curation, and exhibition” (Watkins, Sellen & Lindley, 2015; p.3423). Specifically, the role of ICTs in collecting is threefold. First, ICTs facilitate the connection of like-minded collectors (Geismar, 2013). People have always collected objects, but in the past finding a fellow collector of the unique set of items was possible only at specialized fairs and exhibitions—if ever. Now Facebook groups, blogs and apps for collectors offer unique opportunities for networking and act as community self-help groups (Scaraboto et al., 2016). Sharing new possessions with this community helps ‘legitimise’ an experience that might otherwise be viewed as strange when others recognize a collection as worthwhile (Belk &
Second, once-private collections and items are being shared with fellow collectors and broader audiences organized around hashtags, posts and texts constituting a collective curation of private collections (co-curation) (Scaraboto et al., 2016). Third, ICTs have enabled the materialisation of experiences, broadening the range of potential collectable items. Digital objects such as social media profiles, photos and blogs contain a degree of digital materiality (Mardon & Belk, 2018) and therefore can be used to transform abstract experiences into a collection of tangible objects enabling their documentation, preservation, editing and sharing.

3. Methodology

We adopted the interpretive research tradition in qualitative research in which individuals construct the studied phenomenon (Gephart, 2004). The data collection process included unconstrained in-depth exploratory interviews to allow respondents to speak freely and delve into a complicated and often personal phenomenon. In total, we interviewed 22 frequent travellers. We continued interviewing people until answers to our questions began repeating previous concepts and clear patterns emerged. We reached theoretical saturation (Eisenhardt, 1989) after the 19th interview but completed the remaining scheduled interviews. The interviews were recorded. An average interview lasted 45 minutes (range from 32 minutes to 2 hours). All data were transcribed, resulting in 330 pages of data material. We conducted a three-stage data analysis process. First, we sought emerging themes and associated data with first-order codes by assigning conceptual codes to chunks of text in the transcripts (Strauss, 1987). At this stage, we attempted to retain interviewees’ voices and adhere to requests to make “the research language visible” (Järlström, Saru & Vanhala, 2018, p. 708).

4. Findings

To adequately conceptualize the process of collecting travelling experiences, we explored its possible stages and processes. Data analysis revealed four main stages derived from the thematic analysis as first-order themes, each of which consists of several processes (14 in total). The four stages are (a) Planning, (b) Travelling, (c) Curating and (d) Sharing. Figure 1 depicts graphically this process.

Stage 1: Planning

The first step in the process of collecting travelling experiences is Planning. Here, the traveller explores the available options and designs the next trip (Table 3). Uniqueness and rarity are two of the major reasons for an item to be included in a collection (Belk et al., 1988; Lee & Trace, 2009), with unique destinations deemed more admirable in the traveller’s quest for the extraordinary (Lang & Crouch, 2005).

Spending a month in Africa was guided by the expectation to live the unexpected. I wanted to be somewhere none of my friends has been before, to have the potential to be surprised and be in awe. If you live in France, how unusual can a visit to London or Rome or Athens really be? (Thibault)

Social reasons also affected the choice of destination, such as travel companions’ preferences or a calculation of which place might reflect better on the traveller’s identity (“When I shared that photo from a small village in Vietnam […] you wouldn’t believe the reaction I got!” Andie). While presumably every traveller must go through some form of planning and focus on issues of convenience, budget or other practicalities, what set our informants apart is the thought process behind every trip and the set of criteria applied.

Stage 2: Travelling

In our data analysis, four second-order items emerged that are associated with the stage of Travelling or acquiring the planned experience: memory management, immersion, connection with others and development of self, i.e. learning (Table 4). Memory management is useful as a tool to gain validation and legitimacy among acquaintances and fellow travellers. Retelling the stories results in social currency for the collector and enables reliving the tourist experience (Magdol & Bessel, 2003). Proof of the trip is useful for competitive travel websites that record points and also for sceptical friends. One of our younger respondents recalled a friend fake-reporting on his Facebook page that he was in Rome and the negative comments this received. Perhaps this is why this participant always accompanies Facebook posts of trips with photos:

Maybe [take] a selfie with the plane, or some landmark in the background […] for my followers but also for me, Facebook will remind me in a year and I will instantly travel back to that moment in time. (Danae)

Social media enable memory preservation but also can take over the discussion and transform the experience. When Anthony, an active traveller and Instagram user was asked about a specific photo in his profile, he admitted he remembered less information about the actual experience and more on the discussion that followed:
The memory stays in your mind and in your phone. Once uploaded it takes a different form. Yes Eiffel Tower was amazing but to be honest when I see this photo what comes to mind is more about the 308 likes and comments it generated and less about the experience itself. (Anthony)

Other informants stressed the importance of preserving these memories mainly for themselves. Postcards, refrigerator magnets, maps and clothes were all used to build memories for the future self.

**Step 3: Curating**

In most of our respondents’ narratives, a distinct need to quantify their experiences emerged. We expected such a drive for the few competitive travellers we interviewed whose standing in this community is measured by areas visited, but the finding that the majority of respondents focused on counting numbers, consciously enumerating their trips, measuring their progression towards a goal and striving for completion of the hunt was a surprising. More than a few informants stated that they were ‘list’ people. For example, Esther described her feelings when thinking about her collection of fridge magnets representing all the countries she has been to: “how cool would it be to fill this entire fridge? I have calculated that I need 20–25 more countries to do it ... or a smaller fridge!” Of significant importance are the implications of this competitive attitude for travellers’ well-being. Thibault described how obsession to reach 100 countries has minimised the pleasure he receives from travelling, while Elizabeth explained that she only travelled to Greece because she had been gifted a fridge magnet from Athens and “couldn’t stand seeing it knowing [she] hadn’t been there.”

Equally surprising was the need of many of our respondents to turn their immaterial experiences into something visible and solid. Offline exotic and rare souvenirs are displayed visibly in collectors’ personal spaces, and online photos, videos, stories, blog posts and check-ins all become part of the uploader’s identity. These intangible objects help solidify their experiences (Mardon & Belk, 2018). Emmanuel’s dream is to fill his passport with stamps from different locations before it expires:

Passport stamps serve as a tool to solidify the travelling experiences but also as irrefutable proof for competitive travel sites that need to see them before awarding ‘points’ for highly ranked members. Nomad Mania, a popular competitive tourism website, is mostly based on self-reported trips, but for higher-ranking members, proof is required for a random subset of their trips.

**Step 4: Sharing**

After the collection is built and organised, it is ready to be shared. Our data analysis identified three distinct practices: Exhibiting, or presenting information about an individual trip or the collection; Bragging, by turning the items of the collection into currency to communicate the collector’s achievements; and Gratifying by capitalising on social approval. A deeper motive that came up in discussions only after further probing pertained to respondents’ response to peer pressure, mainly from social media. Prior research indicates that online photography can play a decisive role in travel-related behaviour and decisions (Lo & McKercher, 2015), but we captured an active effort to keep up with friends and acquaintances in a digital world where travelling is glorified (Gössling, 2017), with significant implications for travellers’ well-being.

Travelling gave collectors not only the simple enjoyment of visiting a new country and taking time off but also the opportunity to capitalise on other people’s admiration in various ways. As extreme was monetising people’s interest, to promote books, journals and websites via social media. A more common approach was gratifying through bonding and bridging social capital (Putnam, 2004), in which the collector gains the recognition of fellow travellers and the admiration of friends and acquaintances. By collecting places, people enjoy the admiration and recognition of neighbours, friends and relatives (Timothy, 1998):

**5. Discussion**

Our informants’ behaviour often did not resemble that of ordinary travellers and more accurately replicated that of other collectors. Similar to what collectors of tangible items do, our respondents created rules about when a country visit ‘counts’; item collectors create and follow rules, specialisations and procedures for cultivating their collection (Danet & Katriel, 1994). They embraced the pain and sacrifice of travelling and resembled item collectors who willingly brand themselves as obsessive and admit that their collections have brought personal problems at work or at home (Sherrell et al. 1991). Many of the people interviewed expressed the need to visit every potential destination: “If a country exists, it must be visited” (Horace). The need to complete a collection is a major characteristic of all collectors (Saridakis & Angelidou, 2018). Organising, storing, caring for,
maintaining and exhibiting collections by displaying them to oneself and to others are also important collecting practices (Watkins et al., 2015). Finally, collectors enjoy sharing information about their collection with other people (Long & Schiffman, 1997), and the role of social comparisons in increasing competitiveness is well known (Festinger, 1954; Garcia et al., 2013). We observed this in our respondents’ behaviour as well, as their competitive side resembled collectors who are competitive by nature and are always working towards improving their current collection (Belk, 1991).

Extending the limited and mostly normative literature on competitive tourism and travel collectors, our empirical research confirms that choice of destination is indeed influenced by the ability to show off trips to others (Siegel & Wang, 2019), by the destination’s uniqueness and peculiarity (Timothy, 1998) or by potential surprise and satisfaction (Belk, 1995). A surprising finding is the impact of this collecting practice on travellers’ identity. Theory on competitive travelling suggests that tourists plan their trips with the goal to maximize the number of places they can visit and optimize the resources they can use (Gössling, 2017). This idiosyncratic tendency has a significant impact on travellers’ well-being because it can cause negative feelings, such as FOMO, stress and alienation from their friends and families (Krasnova et al., 2013; Przybylski et al., 2013). Although we found evidence of such behaviours and their negative consequences, we also stumbled across many informants who went beyond this ‘been everywhere, seen nothing’ approach and used their competitive feelings as a motive to get to know more cultures, connect genuinely with local communities and fellow competitive (or not) travellers, get gratification for their adventures and manage their memories more effectively. This indicates that, though some aspects of competitive travelling are rather superficial (e.g. bragging on social media, competing with peers on the number of places one has visited), other aspects are more complicated and have a deeper meaning for travellers. Moreover, it proves that the impact of travellers’ competitive attitudes on their well-being can be both negative and positive depending on their personality, self-awareness and overall attitude towards travelling.

The study’s findings uncover the previously unknown process of collecting travelling experience and outline its role in influencing travelling motives, behaviours and outcomes. Responding to calls for further research on the consequences of increased mobility, competitiveness and social pressure on people’s travelling behaviour (Gössling, 2017), our study offers a framework based on collecting theories and describes how travellers plan, curate and share their trips. By explaining how each step and process of collecting travelling experiences works, we shed light on a travelling behaviour that has received limited research attention. Moreover, we offer insights into the mechanics and main characteristics of each sub-process within the broader collecting process. Another contribution of the study pertains to its focus on the impact of collecting travelling experiences on travellers’ well-being (Caprariello & Reis, 2013) and on destinations’ sustainability (Gössling, 2017). As our findings indicate, this process goes beyond just enjoying some travelling experiences and sharing them on social media (Lee & Oh, 2017) by demonstrating how people develop attitudes and behaviours resembling those of traditional collectors. Thus, we show that the significant changes ICTs have brought to the way people travel may also have positive consequences that should not be ignored. Finally, we contribute to the literature on collecting. Pearce (1998) estimates that one in three members of the UK and North American population is or has at some time been a collector, but research in this field remains scarce. We answer calls to further examine the relationship between collecting objects and collecting intangible experiences (Keinan & Kivetz, 2011) and the social/solitary nature of collecting (Spaid, 2018).

Our study has significant implications for academics, as it offers a new theoretical lens through which a new and relatively unexplored travelling behaviour can be explained. We also add to the crucial discourse on the roles of social media and other ICT platforms in shaping travellers’ motives, attitudes, behaviours and well-being, by offering a different approach to the existing literature. This approach can also help tourism organizations, local authorities and policy makers better understand their audiences’ preferences and potential behaviour. Destinations interested in attracting more visitors should attempt to work with competitor destinations to create ‘sets of experiences’ instead of an isolated activity. For example, the US National Park Service provides each visitor to one national park a booklet containing a list of all other parks. Visitors can then visit all the parks and receive a different stamp from each (King & Prideaux, 2010). Similarly, cities, islands, monuments, bars or restaurant can gain a differential advantage by working with other similar destinations and appealing to the collecting nature of travellers. Finally, our findings could also be useful for policy makers trying to reduce the negative impact of frequent travelling on the environment and the social sustainability of local communities, as they provide a blueprint for a potentially more sustainable way of travelling, in which people’s actions are driven by a pursuit of authentic experiences and connection with local peoples and cultures.

Reference List Available Upon Request
The importance of culture in sustainable tourism

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Abstract
Research on sustainable tourism has grown substantially in the last three decades. While most attention has been given to the role of general tourism and nature-based tourism to generate more sustainable tourism solutions, culture-based tourism has received less attention. This paper contributes to filling this void by demonstrating how culture-based activities might cause more sustainable intentions among local citizens and tourists. Based on a survey (n= 522), travelers and locals were recruited from the region named Sunnfjord in Norway, located along the west coast of the country. To collect data, a survey instrument was developed. The questionnaire included questions related to potential activities the respondents could be involved in and 10 scale-based items related to sustainable intentional behavior. The activity types were based on the official distinction used by Fjord Norway, with travelers reporting on the type of activity they participated in and not the frequency of participation. Altogether, 26 different activities were included in the questionnaire, and the 26 types of activities were categorized as culture-based, restaurant-based, shopping-based, and nature-activity-based. We illustrate that inhabitants and tourists involved in culture-based activities such as museums, theatres, music festivals and art exhibitions do have a significantly higher intention to engage in sustainable behavior than their counterparts.

Key words: Culture-based tourism, Sustainable intentions, Sustainable behavior, Survey

Introduction
Sustainable issues related to tourism have been highly discussed by politicians and researchers for years. In early November 2021, climate change was the main issue discussed at the UN Climate Change conference in Glasgow (COP26). There is common agreement among researchers that climate change has caused serious problems for our common community and for the travel and tourism industry. For example, at the end of 2019, all temperature records were broken in Northern Europe, where a heatwave caused record surface melting of the Greenland Ice Sheet (European Commission, 2020). Increased warming is expected to have a huge impact on the tourism sector. This will cause extreme weather events, winter tourism decline, changes in tourist activities, destruction of the tourism landscape, changes in growing seasons, and changes in fish, animal stocks and ecosystem services, among others (Boy et al., 2019; Malinauskaite et al., 2019). In response to this, tourism researchers have discussed how tourism might contribute to reducing climate change and increasing sustainable solutions for over three decades (Scott, 2010; Hall and Saarinen, 2021, Oklevik, et al. 2019). The main focus in this research tradition is how general tourism could be utilized to develop more sustainable solutions with reduced traveling and with activities with fewer CO₂ footprints, such as increasing tourists’ length of stay (Oklevik et al. 2019, Oklevik et al. 2021), targeting short-haul markets (Oklevik et al. 2019), and the use of more sustainable transportation solutions (Peters et al. 2019). However, studies in nature-based tourism focus on the transition of tourism systems toward more sustainable solutions (Lin et al. 2020). Research shows that nature-based recreation, such as tourists’ experiences with wetlands (Lee, 2011), islands (Lee et al., 2015), rural
communities (Lee & Jan, 2015a), mountain areas (He, Hu, Swanson, Su, & Chen, 2018) and urban parks (Zhao et al., 2018), might result in more environmentally responsible behavior. While most attention has been given to the role of general tourism and nature-based tourism to generate more sustainable tourism solutions, less attention has been given to culture-based tourism. On the other hand, cultural tourism is confirmed as an essential part of tourism consumption (Richards, 2018). The UNWTO “Report on Tourism and Cultural Synergies” (2017) stated that over 39% of all international tourism arrivals, or 516 million international trips, in 2017 can be accounted for as cultural tourism. Furthermore, the number of cultural tourists is expected to grow. UNWTO (2017, p.18) also provided a new operational definition: “cultural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor’s essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination”. Despite the relatively large role of culture in worldwide tourism, the role of culture as a tool to develop more sustainable tourism solutions has been less focused in the literature. In our initial screening for literature in the leading journal in the field, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, using the Web of Sciences, we discovered 1431 journal articles in the period from 2008 to 2021. Thirteen of these journal articles included culture in the article title. Only 5 out of these 13 articles were linked to environmental issues (Su 2010, Yang et al. 2014, Filiminou et al. 2018, Movono et al. 2018, Ma et al. 2021). This paper contributes to filling this void by demonstrating how culture-based activities might cause more sustainable intentions among local citizens and tourists.

**Method**

The empirical basis for this study is a sample from the region Sunnfjord in Norway, located along the west coast. We employed a survey design targeting travelers, tourists, and local inhabitants in the region. To collect data, a survey instrument was developed. The questionnaire included questions related to potential activities the respondents could be involved in and 10 scale-based items related to sustainable intentional behavior. The activity types were based on the official distinction used by Fjord Norway, with travelers reporting on the type of activity they participated in and not the frequency of participation. Altogether, 26 different activities were included in the questionnaire. In addition, the respondents also filled out information about gender, age, education and place of origin (postal code). To obtain a mixed sample consisting of tourists and locals, the respondents were recruited in several different locations, such as museums, theatres, music festivals, shopping centers and accommodations as hotels and campsites. Altogether 522 respondents were recruited. The period of data collection lasted from Easter until December 2021 because we wanted to avoid seasonal biases in the sample. The data in this survey were gathered simultaneously through two channels: paper questionnaires were distributed physically among the visitors by the representatives of all ten project partners. At the same time, Survey Monkey, a cloud-based software for online survey development, was used to digitize the questionnaire and generate a QR code that could be used by the respondents who scanned it and answered the survey on their mobile devices. The same software was also used to save the answers and generate a file, which in the next step was analyzed in SPSS 27 statistical software.

**Results and discussion**

40.8% of the sample were men, 59.2% women. The average age was 45.0 years. The respondents were moderately educated: primary school (7.6%), secondary school (29.0%), university/college < 4 years (26.1%) and university/college ≥ 4 years (37.3%). A total of 30.8% of the respondents were from the Sunnfjord region, and 69.2% were from other regions in Norway or abroad. Based on a discussion between the authors, the 26 types of activities were categorized as culture-based, restaurant-based, shopping-based, and nature-activity-based. Based on these categories, 4 dummy variables were developed. The authors coded the cultural dummy variable as 1 if the respondent had participated in activities such as art exhibitions, museums, cinema, and/or theatre and 0 otherwise. The authors used the same procedure for the three other dummy variables. To measure sustainable behavior among the respondents, 10 items were employed: “traveling less by plane”, “driving less by car”, “holidays closer to home”, “walking and cycling more”, “eating more local food”, “eating less meat”, “eating more vegetarian food”, “buying more local products”, “buying longer-lasting products” and “paying more for products with ecocert”s. All ten items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). The items were developed during a qualitative pilot study, done by the authors based on the public debate in Norway about what sustainable behavior should be aimed for. The ten items were aggregated into a sustainability intentional behavioral index (mean=3.80, stdv=1.39).
The approach described above allowed us to compare the sustainability behavior between different activity groups. We divided the sample into two groups based on the cultural dummy variable. Respondents involved in cultural activities were coded 1, and the others were coded 0. The two groups had a sustainable index score of Mean\(_{\text{Culture}}=4.07\), Mean\(_{\text{No-culture}}=3.52\), \((t=3.31, p<0.01)\), showing a significant difference in mean scores. Dividing the sample into restaurant vs. no-restaurant groups gave mean scores on the sustainability index of Mean\(_{\text{Restaurant}}=3.83\) and Mean\(_{\text{No-restaurant}}=3.74\), \((t=0.51, p>0.10)\), showing no significant difference in mean scores. We then divided the sample into two groups, travelers and locals doing grocery shopping coded as 1 and others as 0, which gave mean scores on the sustainability index as Mean\(_{\text{Culture}}=3.80\), Mean\(_{\text{No-culture}}=3.80\), \((t=0.03, p>0.10)\), showing no significant difference in mean scores. Finally, we divided the sample into two groups and coded respondents who had participated in nature-based activities as 1 and those who did not as 0. This gave mean scores on the sustainability index as Mean\(_{\text{Nature-based activity}}=3.76\), Mean\(_{\text{No nature-based activities}}=3.87\), \((t=0.68, p>0.10)\), showing no significant difference in mean scores. The results show that respondents involved in culture-based activities have a significantly higher intention to engage in sustainable behavior than their counterparts. Furthermore, cultural tourism is also linked to positive elements such as stimulation of the economy and preservation of cultural heritage (Richards, 2018, 2001). In sum, cultural tourism can strengthen the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability.

References


Feeling safe and its impact on tourists’ intention to revisit

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Abstract

Purpose:  
Over the last two decades, there has been increasing research in tourism to explore tourist experiences, particularly in terms of their emotional aspect. Emotions have played important roles in influencing the tourism experience at different stages of travel (Hosany et al., 2021). Previous studies presented that feelings regarding tourists’ perception of safety/risks could play a decisive role in tourists’ decision-making process if they find the destination is unsafe to visit (Zou & Meng, 2020). Some tourism attractions are always on the unsafe list as the probability of a natural disaster is high. The similar rationales can be applied to locations, regions, or countries that have been suffering wars, terrorism attacks, extreme poverty and so on (Brown et al., 2004; Lepp et al., 2011; Sofield, 2006). Individuals’ safety feelings also vary at different stages of their trip. There are different factors influencing tourists’ feeling of safety toward or at the tourism destination, such as safety information, security facilities and equipment, local social orders, and safety management (Sebra et al., 2013; Wang & Lopez, 2020). Whether tourists feel safe may also lead to tourism experience directly as tourists may feel the dangers and insecurity on-site. Such an experience will then become the composition of tourists’ knowledge of the destination, which may further lead to post-trip behaviour (e.g., revisit, WOM).

Originality/value:  
The findings of this study will contribute to tourism experience research, affect research in tourism, destination management. Although the role of safety has been investigated in multi-dimensions in terms of scale for developing destination safety management such as Xie et al., 2021 created measurement scales of tourist perception of destination safety, Yen et al. (2021) established the measurement of destination safety climate, they did not investigate emotion (e.g. feeling safe). Specifically, Zou and Meng (2020) researched a sense of safety and presented only descriptive data which did not assess the relationship with other constructs. Therefore, this study applies Hosany’s tourism emotion model (2021) to measure feeling safe and the effects of stimuli such as physical setting (Otto & Ritchie, 1996), people (Schroeder, 1996), process (Hollebeek, & Rather, 2019) towards destination loyalty. We hypothesise that physical settings, people and process at the destination have a direct impact on tourists’ feeling safe, which further lead to their post-trip behaviour, i.e. Word-of-Mouth and tourist intention to revisit.

Study design/methodology/approach:  
To echo the challenges in the existing tourism safety studies, we propose a conceptual framework that consists of a set of antecedent variables including physical settings, process and people which may lead to feeling safe and encompass to loyalty (revisit and positive WOM) (see Figure 1). To collect data, this study will be used a quantitative questionnaire survey to measure the hypothesised relationships among the international tourists visited in Thailand, which was rated hight in the list of unsafe destination in Southeast Asia (World Economic Forum, 2019).
Practical implications:
The findings of this study will help the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) to create a safe feeling via creating a safer physical environment, developing a safety management process, providing training to stakeholders at the destination so as to increase the rate of revisit and more positive WOM from tourists.

Key Words: Feeling safe; Tourism destination; Intention to visit; Word of mouth

References


The role of local products in the development of gastronomy tourism: The case of Naxos island

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Abstract:
Undoubtedly, gastronomy tourism has developed into one of the most dynamic and creative sectors of world tourism. Gastronomy tourism is based on the interrelationship between food, agriculture and tourism. The connection of tourism with the local food networks supports the local producers and boosts the local economies. Local products are an integral part of the cultural heritage of tourist destinations, giving them a unique identity. In this context, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the role played by local products in shaping the unique tourist identity of Naxos, as well as the level of gastronomy tourism development on the island. Naxos is an island in the Cyclades, Greece, well-known for its quality products and unique local cuisine. In order to meet this objective, a qualitative research was conducted, using semi-structured in-depth interviews which took place during March and April 2021 with fourteen key informants. The results showed that participants had a very good knowledge of the variety of products of the primary and secondary production of the island. A special mention was made to the products of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and the products of Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) that are produced on the island. Although, as they stated, the visitors of the island are interested to try the local flavors and even to buy local products, these products have not found yet their place satisfactorily in the hotels and restaurants of the island. Regarding the level of development of gastronomy tourism, the majority of them believe that this type of tourism is in the stage of development during the last five to ten years. The strong points of the island that support its development, according to their opinions are the characteristics of the primary sector (high employment, special agricultural techniques, mild climate, fertile soil quality) and the exquisite taste and quality of the products produced. On the other hand, several weaknesses and impediments to the development of gastronomy tourism were identified, the main ones of which are the lack of organization and policy in the promotion of gastronomy tourism, the lack of cooperation and collective action between the stakeholders, and the lack of knowledge, education and culture oriented to gastronomy tourism. Despite the obstacles, all participants agreed that local products can shape in the future the development of a unique tourist identity of the island of Naxos. In this process, the crucial factors seem to be the effective advertising and promotion, the development of partnerships, and the standardization and certification of the culinary services provided. Findings and discussion of this study are useful to tourism marketers, academic researchers and other stakeholders interested in gastronomy tourism.

Keywords: gastronomy tourism, local products, Naxos, Greece
Stakeholder and business owners’ opinions regarding tourism development in Crete - A qualitative study

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Abstract
Tourism is a complex system of interwoven functions and business practices. As the competitive nature of the industry intensifies day by day, and the degree of business complexity and interdependence reaches its peak, there is an increasing need for an advanced monitoring mechanism in decision support (Tsoukala et al. 2018). The current research addresses this issue by focusing on developing a tourism observatory at the Region of Crete. Specifically, the current research examines the problems that stakeholders and business owners face, the sources of information they use to take key decisions and what they believe about the way a tourism observatory could contribute to the improvement of a destination’s tourism product.

A total of fifty-two private and public sector organizations participated in this qualitative research, as well as companies of tourist interest, from all over the island of Crete. The main purpose of this research is to investigate Crete’s tourism product / destination image and examine tourism operators’ opinions about the destination. According to the empirical findings it is important and necessary, to establish an innovative tool, such as a Tourism Observatory, that will provide timely information to all stakeholders involved in the tourism sector.

Key words: Tourism organizations, Tourism product, Tourism Observatory, Information, Sustainability

Introduction
The main purpose of the research is to act as a guide for the creation of a tourism observatory to facilitate tourism policy making, as part of the Regional authority of Crete. The vision behind this research purpose is the creation of a vehicle through which the Region of Crete can facilitate towards the development and decision making in a complex industry, such as tourism. in addition, the paper aims to contribute towards local and regional stakeholders’ views, regarding the offered tourist product in Crete. The main research questions are:

1. What are the problems that concern the tourism operators / organizations?

2. What data do they look for and what data do they use to deal with problems and take decisions; from what sources do they get them?

3. In which way, a Tourism Observatory can contribute in order to improve decision making process that will result in the improvement of destination’s tourist product?

The value of the Observatories has been recognized within the scientific and research community (Tsoukala et al. 2018, Bertocchi et al. 2020, Caicedo et al. 2020). Observatories act as strategic units and innovative tools (Varra et al. 2012), which support complex knowledge networks, between private and public operators, providing timely and reliable information on the development, trends, dynamics and position of a tourism product in the global market (Milheiro et al. 2011). The European Commission speaks of the importance of the Observatories as tools to support a competitive and sustainable model for the development of tourist destinations. It is also in the process of implementing the European Virtual Tourism Observatory (EVTO).
The researchers’ main purpose is the current research to contribute to the most effective establishment of the Crete Tourism Observatory by providing basic and advanced information on the tourism phenomenon. This information concerns the portrait of the current tourism situation as shaped by the operators themselves, as well as the type of data they use in their critical decision-making process and the sources they get those data. The value of the information obtained from this research is unquestionable. In addition, proper use of this information could lead to an upgrade of the regional tourist product on offer. This contribution could be twofold. On the one hand, it provides timely and accurate data which is rather essential in order to support a highly competitive sector, such as tourism. On the other hand, it is a valuable resource for a destination that focuses on sustainable practices (Miculic et al. 2015, Oliveira et al. 2018).

Research Methodology

There is a need to understand the subjective views of tourism stakeholders on the multidimensional phenomenon of tourism. This need has led to the use of qualitative research method. Qualitative research allows research analysis to be based on the specific research questions but also on researcher’s perception and practical concerns (Mason, 2002). Other researchers describe qualitative research as the process of completing a puzzle. The resulting image is “socially constructed” depending on the nature of the research questions and the researcher’s way of thinking (Saunders et al, 2019).

The current research was conducted in the fall of 2021, through six (6) queries which were sent to 152 tourism operators in Crete. The main purpose was to investigate and gain knowledge and information on which there was no pre-recorded data. Due to the restrictions imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic, the questionnaire was chosen to be distributed electronically, via email. Then there was a telephone contact with each stakeholder, in order to confirm the receipt of the questionnaire and in case it was necessary, a second stage of the email campaign. The results of the qualitative research were finally based on the responses of 52 operators (response rate ≈ 35%).

Purposive sampling was used to conduct the research, which means that the sample was selected deliberately (not randomly or objectively), based on researchers’ subjective knowledge of the sample’s characteristics (Mantzoukas, 2007). The final sample consisted of 52 tourist stakeholders operating in Crete, as they are the most suitable to provide comprehensive and meaningful answers to the research questions. In addition, they are directly interested in the results that will be produced by a Tourism Observatory and they are the key players in tourism strategic planning in Crete.

Research Results

As mentioned above, a total of 152 stakeholders were approached, 52 of which eventually participated in the research. It was considered appropriate for answers to be sorted, based on the activity sector they belong and on their geographic location. Based on the activity sector, 33% of the entities belong to the accommodation sector, 24% are public / government entities, 16% belong to the transport sector, 8% consisted of travel agencies and 18% from various other sectors. Additionally, 27% of the participating organizations were located in Heraklion prefecture, 27% of them in Chania prefecture, 14% were located in Lasithi prefecture and 14% on Rethymno prefecture. Approximately 18% of respondents had a regional mandate covering the whole island.

It seems that companies and members of the tourism industry are facing a lot of common issues. So, based on the set of answers such issues are economic constraints due to the Covid – 19 pandemic, exhaustive and unstable tax policy, funding difficulties, bureaucracy, lack of infrastructure, lack of common tourism policy and cooperation, reduced configuration and promotion of alternative forms of tourism, absence of specialized staff and personnel training and last but not least lack of up-to-date statistics, especially at a local level.

One of the most important priorities of the Region of Crete is the need to enforce national tourism policy making for the region through the engagement of all competent and interested stakeholders on the island. Hence, the problem that was highlighted was the adoption of a more inclusive approach in decision making, and one that would favour and built networks and alliances between stakeholders. Below are noted all the information obtained about data use, data sources, tourism observatory contribution as well as the proposals for improving the quality of the tourism sector of Crete, according to the views of the participating stakeholders, some of which are related to addressing the above difficulties.

Based on stakeholders’ answers, 80% of them use data from third party sources; while 20% answered that they do not use any data. Industry and sectoral studies emerged as the main sources of information. In fact, the
majority of the sample referred to them. In this research, industry studies are defined as all the specialized studies which are prepared to reflect tourism market’s structure. According to the participants in the survey, such surveys are carried out by World Tourism Organization, Hellenic Statistical Authority, Bank of Greece, Region of Crete, educational institutions of Crete, Hotel Chambers etc. In addition, 25.6% use data from government agencies, 17.5% use data from national collective tourism agencies (e.g. GNTO, SETE, INSETE, HATTA etc.), 13.5% use data from specifically tourism industry studies, 10.8% use data from the press, 9.5% use data from surveys conducted by their organization and 12% use data from various other sources such as officially institutionalized bodies whose activity concerns exclusively the tourism industry. Although the existence of evidence based decision making in tourism is fairly extensive in Crete, yet the proportion of stakeholders relying on hearsay and their own intuition is still rather extensive.

Stakeholders’ responses revealed some key data categories that stakeholders turn to as sources of information to their decision making process. One of these categories concerns market research and data on visitor demographic characteristics (i.e., age) and country of origin. Another category contains information about visitors’ preferences, such as why they choose a destination or accommodation or restaurant, etc., their interests during the trip, their favorite activities, their satisfaction levels and factors of dissatisfaction and also sources from which they prefer to be informed. The main category they use is quantitative data such as visitor numbers, the level of tourist expenditure, accommodation information and occupancy rates, etc. In addition, operators draw data for information resources, such as travel fairs, collaboration opportunities, financial programs, international tourism trends and statistical analyzes and reports.

As far as the contribution of a tourism observatory, the majority of participants agreed that the collection, recording and utilization of statistical data on tourism sizes and tourism activity at a regional and a local level, will directly contribute to the planning of an integrated tourism strategy and therefore to a better decision-making. Starting new collaborations between the interested parties, the right coordination and the detailed proposals from the Crete Tourism Observatory will help in the improvement of the offered tourist product and possibly in the extension of the tourist season.

Crete Tourism Observatory can act as an advisor, helping improvement in goal setting, manage tourist destinations and effective practices by promoting and highlighting the characteristics that distinguish them from other tourist destinations. Recording and documenting the advantages and disadvantages, taking advantage of future opportunities and properly addressing any threats, will create better prospects and lead to the use of innovative practices.

In short, all of the above can be summarized in four basic sections. Firstly, there is a need for an integrated tourism strategy with a greater and better promotion of “Crete” as a brand name and the extension of tourist season. There is also a need for a more successful cooperation through which there will be a market interconnection, tackling bureaucracy, improving “response” to the changing environment through exchanging of information and know-how. The collection and utilization of statistics and other data will contribute to more detailed proposals and ultimately to the improvement of tourism product. Finally, organizing training and certificated programs will result in more specialized staff, in the improvement of customer satisfaction as well as in the attraction of new customers.

Based on the answers given by stakeholders, we can easily deduce the main issues that concern them. Addressing those issues will significantly contribute to the improvement of the tourism sector in Crete. Almost all participants believe that the main points that need improvement are the development of alternative forms of tourism, improvement of infrastructure, staff training, environmental protection and improvement of
cooperation between stakeholders. Tourism infrastructure issues have been at the forefront of the policy agenda in the region for a very long time now (Andriotis, 2005) and is considered a recurrent problem. The two other recent additions to the discussion relate to staff training and co-operation between stakeholders. Staff training is particular seems to be a very topical issue and needs to be examined more carefully especially at a time where recruitment and retention of skilled and experienced labour in tourism is very hard to secure (Bompolakis et al., 2022). The above mentioned suggestions are consistent with results from previous research on tourism performance, where the significant effect of some specific factors is demonstrated. Factors such as tourism and related infrastructure factors, labor skills and training factors, environmental sustainability factors and destination’s natural and cultural resources (Rodriguez Díaz & Espino Rodríguez, 2016; Assaf & Josiassen, 2012). Training is also essential in delivering the strategic objectives set by managers in the industry and it plays an important role in improving the knowledge, skills and abilities of employees within the industry (Blake, Sinclair, and Soria 2006). Recent studies have also shown that tourists are more likely to return to those destinations that provide a higher level of service (Alegre and Cladera 2006).

Most of the suggestions concern the abovementioned characteristics / factors. Some of the common suggestions refer to the planning and organizing of educational seminars in order to improve staff training. Others refer to the promotion of alternative forms of tourism as a measure to address negative consequences of mass tourism. Upgrading of infrastructure (tourist or not), use of innovative marketing tools and new technologies with less negative effects on the environment, study of tourist sizes and competitors and regularly informing stakeholders about best practices are also suggestions noted by the participants.

Conclusions

In conclusion, based on the answers given by the participating organizations, in Crete there is a serious lack of tourism infrastructure that not only degrade the tourist product on offer but at the same time undermine the life of the locals. Any attempt to modernize the infrastructure is incomplete because it is not based on a specific guideline from which strategic decisions are defined. The main problem contributes to this, is the general absence of a long-term tourism policy that aims to make the island's tourism product more competitive and sustainable. This was an area where the overwhelming majority of stakeholders have identified, and emphasized upon. This fact is intensified by the excessive bureaucratic environment. On the one hand bureaucracy acts as a barrier on the operation of tourism businesses, while on the other hand puts pressure on the competent tourism authorities which shoulder a large workload. In addition, the exclusion of stakeholders from the decision-making centers, further intensifies the issue of the collaboration deficit in tourism policy making.

However, it is certain that no joint effort to upgrade the tourism product can succeed if it is not based on valid and reliable data. This is another problem that plagues the development of a distinct identity of the island and the repositioning of its tourist product in the global market. Currently, there is no updated tourist data concerning Crete and focusing on a regional level as well as on a municipal level. This data can substantially highlight the tourism demand and supply of the destination, give a picture of the tourism labor market and also be the fundamental axis for assessing the fate of the tourism product and for the timely identification of potential opportunities and threats.

Although tourism stakeholders and organizations use statistical and qualitative data in their decision-making process, from various different sources, they emphasize the need to create an official body responsible for the collection and processing of similar data for Crete. The Tourism Observatory is one of such innovative support tools.

Taking into account all the international standards of other Tourism Observatories, the establishment of Crete Tourism Observatory will be a step towards the global trends of the tourism industry. Through the utilization of special information systems, it can set the starting point for the transformation of the island's tourism product (destination) and the redefinition of its image in the world tourism scene. Close cooperation with tourism companies and also the immediate extraction of tourism data, will contribute to the emergence of results that can give guidelines to solve key problems, leading to the success of long-term development goals. In addition, an Observatory can be a channel of communication between stakeholders, cultivating a collaborative environment in which the exchange of views and practices is encouraged, having as a main purpose the designing of strategic tourism policies.

Finally, the partnership of all stakeholders (private and public) and their contribution to an Observatory is perhaps the key to the success of such project. Besides, in order for a Tourism Observatory to operate, in order to explore current trends in the tourism market and opportunities of each destination, it must also rely on the
collection of reliable and useful data from the tourism market, not only on a national but also on a local, regional and international level. In order to achieve this cooperation, it must be objective, representative, as well as systematic, i.e. it must be done in a specific and predetermined way, to constantly monitor the current developments and problems that arise during the effort to promote the tourism product.

A successful development of a Tourism Observatory requires carrying on of more research based on the present endeavour. Each tourist destination has its own distinct identity and has specialized needs. It is very important to investigate in depth and identify the needs of each tourist destination, so that the development of the Tourism Observatory would be based on them and not on the basis of other research based on data from other destinations.

Limitations

One of the main obstacles encountered by the present study is the outbreak of the pandemic. The need and the imposition of measures of social distancing did not allow the choice of conducting qualitative research live. In addition, an obstacle encountered by the researchers was the wide geographical range from which the participating stakeholders were selected. The choice to use an electronic questionnaire prevented survey participants from seeking further clarification or details for a better understanding of the questions. As a result, in some cases the stakeholders either did not answer with absolute relevance or were ahead with their answers to subsequent questions, losing the flow of questions.

References

− Mantzoukas, S. (2007). “Qualitative research in six easy steps: the epistemology, the methods and the presentation.” *Nursing (Greek journal)*, Vol. 46, pp.88-98.


Image 1: Main sources of data

- From their organization
- Government Tourism Agencies [19 answers]
- National collective tourism Agencies [13 answers]
- Municipalties, Region of Crete, Ministry of Tourism
- SETE, INSETE, HATTA etc.
- Tourism operators studies
- Industry studies [10 answers]
- University Institutions [1 answers]
- Press | Media [8 answers]
- Other [9 answers]
- Printed and Online
- UOC, EMI etc.

Image 2: Main data categories