

Impact of COVID-19 on Digital Consumer Behavior in the Western Balkans [†]

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Abstract: COVID-19, caused health and economic problems in almost all countries. This crisis has caused unprecedented supply and demand shocks and led to significant changes in people's behavior and spending. Demand depends on consumer behavior, which may have changed with the outbreak of the pandemic. Consumer Behavior is a process of analyzing the causes and patterns of consumer behavior when purchasing products and services. The article analyzes the changes in consumer behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Western Balkans.

Keywords: consumer behavior; digital consumerism; Western Balkans; consumer habits

1. Objectives

The concept of consumer behavior represents the activities of purchasing and consuming products and services. It is influenced by various different factors: economic, social, cultural, personal, etc. It is indisputable that the pandemic caused wide-ranging effects, changing consumer behavior on global and national levels [1–5]. Traditional consumer behavior has been significantly transformed, giving way to an increase in digital consumerism [1–3]. Therefore, this paper examines how consumer behavior changed due to and in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic in Western Balkan countries.

2. Methodology

The goal of this research is to determine the level of changes in digital consumer behavior in Western Balkan countries affected by the COVID-19 virus. The approach of the research involved the collection of primary data. The collection method was a survey of consumer behavior, which was distributed online. The survey was conducted through a questionnaire composed of 10 questions and divided into two parts. The first half of the research questions concerned the demographic profiles of the respondents, while the second half was related to digital consumer behavior.

3. Results

In regard to the results of the survey, the most prominent conclusions demonstrate that the majority of respondents have indeed changed their consumer behavior by increasing digital consumerism. Moreover, 60% of the respondents consider digital purchasing safe and are satisfied with their consumer experience. Therefore, almost 80% of respondents are likely to return to the web pages that they feel are safe and have already used for purchasing. The overall rating of the digital consumer experience of the respondents is 8 out of 10.



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4. Implications

The research results obtained in this paper contribute to the growing body of literature in the field of digital consumption and consumer behavior, identifying the changes that took effect in digital consumption in a post-COVID-19 period. The COVID-19 pandemic, as an impetus for behavior change, represents the chance for different enterprises to change and adapt more quickly to the growing digital market [1–5].

5. Originality Value

The originality value can be seen in the scope of the research, which takes into consideration all of the countries from the Western Balkans, i.e., North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania, Bulgaria, and Greece. Furthermore, it examines the rise of digital consumption habits after the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in consumer behavior, which led to the broadening of the scope of digital consumerism. The paper also points to the changes in consumer habits toward the increased use of digital markets.

6. Contribution

The results and findings presented in this paper could be useful for businesses and companies to understand how their own consumers are reacting and to develop a customized strategic approach to business. This research indicates that the new habits now formed will endure, permanently changing how consumers behave. Companies must respond to this changing consumer behavior by creating better business strategies to remain well-positioned in the market and grow even stronger in the future.

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