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**Special Issue on**  
Culture and COVID

**Guest Editors**

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## Editorial

The guest editors' team wants to thank the opportunity the *Journal of the Academy of Business and Emerging Market* (JABEM) offered us with this special issue—*Culture and COVID*. The nature of this topic and the papers that support it allowed us to interact with scholars from different countries and cultural diversity, which constitutes an experience and knowledge incommensurable. In this special issue of JABEM, five excellent papers from multicultural contexts and diversity are included: Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Asia, the Philippines, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Trinidad and Tobago.

In the lead article, *Broeder* evaluates cultural differences caused by individual preferences in uncertainty avoidance in online consumer behavior, assessing the direct effect of culture and the moderated effects of gender and age. An online survey was evaluated based on a regression analysis. Results indicate that countries with the highest uncertainty avoidance are Romania, Japan, and Singapore, and the highest uncertainty tolerant are Russia, Bulgaria, China, and the Dutch. Demographics show women (gender) and Asian and Eastern European (ethnic group) were more uncertainty avoidant. Additionally, older people are more uncertainty avoidant than younger ones. The findings emphasize the importance of utilizing self-categorization to continue analyzing the complexity of cultural diversity for groups and memberships and provide valuable information for decision-makers. The study points to the significance of self-categorization as an indicator of ethnic groups. This type of ethnic identification is related to the commonly used cultural value of uncertainty avoidance.

The next article by *Estrellado, Jimenez and Pasco* analyzes factors that influence online consumers' responses to travel packages and determine levels of association among Filipino Millennial consumers. The data was gathered thru an online survey, and partial square structural equation modeling was used to analyze the data. Findings validate that advertising leads to consumer awareness and that information supply is the primary reason consumers approve of advertising. Also, results showed that consumer awareness leads to consumer perceptions; therefore, high brand awareness could promote positive perceptions among consumers. The article provides important information about factors that can motivate potential consumers to purchase and avail of online travel packages and services.

Switching to COVID, *Camacho, Ramirez and Salazar-Concha* in the next article examine the impact of COVID-19 anxiety and COVID-19 concern on organizational citizenship behavior and the influence of organizational citizenship behavior on corporate citizenship. This study was based on a survey conducted by administering a questionnaire to business owners in the Santander Department in Colombia and was assessed based on an SEM multivariate statistical procedure throughout Partial Least Squares (PLS). Findings are consistent with the idea that COVID-19 concerns positively impact organizational citizenship behavior and the interconnection between organizational citizenship behavior and corporate citizenship. Furthermore, these results confirm organizations' ability to create and exhibit a favorable CC position with high OCBs. In addition, socially responsible businesses build reciprocal ties between employers and workers, inspiring employees to reciprocate with pleasant attitudes and actions toward the enterprise.

In the related fourth article, *Camacho, Rambocas and Banks* evaluate the influence of corporate citizenship on the theory of planned behavior in times of a pandemic, with consumer attitude toward business acting as a moderator. The study investigates consumers' corporate citizenship perceptions of supermarket chains in the Dominican Republic during a pandemic and how those practices influence their planned behavior. The data was obtained thru a survey, and confirmatory factor analysis and multiple regression analysis were applied. Findings significantly link consumers' purchase intentions and behavior to two aspects of corporate citizenship (economic and legal citizenship) and two dimensions of the TPB: subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. Also, the significant relationships between economic citizenship and legal citizenship suggest that consumers' purchase intentions and behavior are enhanced

when supermarkets meet their economic and legal responsibilities. The results show that the more consumers are aware of the supermarkets' corporate citizenship initiatives, the higher their planned purchase behavior. The article contributes to enhancing and extending the understanding of the importance of creating corporate citizenship strategies that can positively influence consumers' planned behavior and improve supermarkets' acceptance.

In the final article, *Doughty and Rambocas* deliver an excellent perspective on how small business owners in Trinidad and Tobago use social media marketing during the pandemic and explore the owners' perceptions of the impact on business performance. Utilizing a qualitative research methodology, the authors uncover a myriad of internal and situational influences that inspired social media marketing efforts amidst the pandemic. The authors propose an innovative theoretical framework that discloses a series of unique encounters that small businesses in a developing small island state confront when implementing and evaluating the usefulness of social media marketing. The study further reveals that several small business owners have very little training and support to formally integrate and assess the effectiveness of social media marketing initiatives on their business operations. The authors also discuss the theoretical and practical implications of the study and provide directions for future research.

In the book review section, *Pasco* reviews the book—Gamble JE, Peteraf PA & Thompson AA 2014. *Essentials of strategic management*. New York, USA: McGraw Hill.

We do hope you will find this Special Issue beneficial. As always, your comments are most welcome.

Respectfully,

*Guest Editors*

*Journal of the Academy of Business and Emerging Markets*

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In a world that is becoming more and more globalized thorough insights on cultural differences in societies have become increasingly necessary. Cultural common beliefs and attitudes disperse and reinforce, with varying effects on the behavior of individual group members. To understand the dynamism of this cultural fluidity, it is imperative to unravel cultural diversity in a restricted and convenient set of cultural values (or dimensions). The complexity of unraveling cultural reality is reflected in the meta-analysis conducted by Taras et al. (2009). Their study established 121 different instruments (or values) to unravel cultural variation. The most used dimensionalization of culture was initiated by Hofstede (2001). In his framework, culture is "the collective mental programming of the human mind, which distinguishes one group of people from another". Different cultures can be distinguished by studying what the members value. For example, some cultures value hierarchy (positions of authority imply more power), whereas other cultures value equality (the relative importance of the individual's interests versus those of the group). Hofstede (2001) identified a set of six dimensions covering cultural differences, namely power/distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, long-term/short-term orientation,



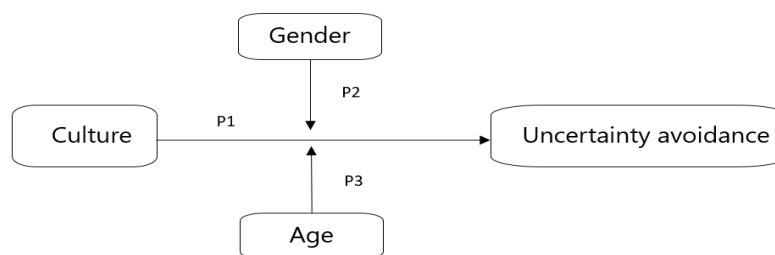
indulgence, and uncertainty avoidance. These dimensions illuminate a major conceptualization of cultural differences developed over decades (see Sent & Kroese 2020 for an overview). They were empirically developed from several large surveys conducted since the late 60s. Initiated by Hofstede, studies by House et al. (2004), Inglehart (1997), and Schwartz (2004) compared large-scale datasets covering a wide range of national cultures of countries. The empirical findings of these comparisons showed that Hofstede's cultural dimensions were more or less replicated, reflected a positive correlation between themselves, and gave rise to new cultural dimensions. Several studies endeavored to systematize the most used sets of cultural dimensions, for example, studies by Nardon and Steers (2009), Beugelsdijk and Welzel (2018), Maleki and de Jong (2014), and most recently, Fog (2021). Specifically, Hofstede's dimensionalization of national culture has been prevalent for a long time and is still widely accepted and appreciated, most likely because of its simplicity and high level of generalization. Most cultural dimensions showed high stability over time (Jackson 2020).

Remarkably, one dimension of Hofstede's cultural values framework, uncertainty avoidance, was a sitting duck. It was relatively less validated in replication studies (see, for instance, Messner 2016, Schmitz & Weber 2014). The perceived level of uncertainty avoidance of national culture was found to be especially susceptible to socio-economic societal changes over time (Minkov 2018, Tarabar 2019). In this respect, this cultural characteristic is appropriate for exploring the cultural variation in the increasingly complex globalizing reality. Elaborating on this, in cultural value-oriented studies, culture mostly refers to the most dominant culture within a nation or country. So, national culture can be studied using aggregate-level data with corresponding generalization across groups. In contrast, the present study explores an individual aggregation level because that is where cultural fluidity occurs.

The purpose of the present investigation is to further explore cultural variation caused by common individual preferences in uncertainty avoidance. The perspective and findings of this study reflect a double-edged significance. First, empirically cultural variation cannot be explored independently from individual-level demographic individual-level characteristics, such as gender and age. Second, conceptionally, in this study, the constructed culture refers to the ethnic self-identification of individual group members. This paper is structured as follows. First, a description of the cultural uncertainty dimension is given, and a brief comparison is made with related constructs in the most influential cross-cultural dimension studies. Further, some investigations are discussed to show the relevance of the demographic factors age and gender in exploring uncertainty avoidance differentiated by culture. Then, the operationalization through the national culture of countries is compared with alternative categorization criteria of cultural and ethnic groups. This is followed by a description of a cross-cultural project investigating ethnic uncertainty avoidance. To this end, the findings of a comparison of 11 different ethnic groups across Asia, Eastern Europe, and Western Europe are presented.

### The Conceptual Model

The conceptual model of the present study, with the position of the three premises, is given in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Model**

*Source: the author*

In the conceptual model, the cultural background (ethnicity) of the respondents was the predictor, and uncertainty avoidance was the dependent variable. Gender and age were assumed to influence the relationship between culture and the degree of uncertainty avoidance. The education level was controlled as a covariate in the analyses. The research question of this study is formulated as follows: what is the effect of culture on certainty avoidance, and to what extent is this effect influenced by gender and age differences?

### Uncertainty Avoidance

Unpredictability is inherent to human experience, expectations, and human behavior. In Hofstede's cultural dimension theory, differences in uncertainty avoidance refer to "the extent to which the members of institutions and organizations within a society feel threatened by uncertain, unknown, ambiguous, or unstructured situations" (Hofstede 2001). Inclination and resilience toward ambiguity and change vary from society to society. Therefore, a more certain and predictable social order is agreed upon with rules and structures to shape the behavior of its members. The levels of predictability and rule orientation reflect the level of ambiguity stress.

Hofstede (2022) expressed the cultural dimensions for national cultures of countries in an index on a 0–100 scale. In the international Values Survey Module 2013 (Hofstede & Minkov 2013), the index for uncertainty avoidance was based on four questions. These questions asked about:

- Perception of tension ("How often do you feel nervous or tense? "Always/Never");
- Health state ("All in all, how would you describe your state of health these days? "Very good/poor");
- Perception of rules ("A company or organization's rules should not be broken—not even when the employee thinks breaking the rule would be in the organization's best interest." "Strongly agree/disagree), and
- Manager-subordinate relationships ("One can be a good manager without having a precise answer to every question that a subordinate may raise about his or her work." "Strongly agree/disagree").

The calculated cultural dimension indexes were conveniently made accessible online (at [www.hofstede-insights.com](http://www.hofstede-insights.com)). With these indexes, several studies did cross-comparisons of national cultures of a large variety of countries (Minkov & Hofstede 2014). Overall, there were mixed replication findings for Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance dimension. Several reasons were identified for these validation conflicts. First, several studies incorrectly included risk avoidance in the dimension of uncertainty avoidance (Alipour 2019). Second, studies used the same label but different operationalization of uncertainty avoidance, which was confusing. For example, the large-scale GLOBE study of 59 countries by House et al. (2004) referred to "collective seeking structure" without a facet of tension, such as in Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance (Venaik & Brewer 2010). Third, nascent empirical investigations by Minkov and Kaasa (2021) and Minkov (2018) suggested a reconceptualization of Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance dimension. Within the uncertainty avoidance of a national culture, rule-structured preferences are not associated with the degree of tension (anxiety and stress) (Minkov & Kaasa 2021). They suggested splitting up cultural uncertainty avoidance into a nation's rule-orientation level and a nation's ambiguity-stress level. Elaborating on this, Kaasa (2021) tried to bring together sets of cultural values of major influential specifications of cultural diversity in one single system. Her synthesis isolated Hofstede's rule orientation facet of uncertainty avoidance. Interestingly, this enabled the pinpointing of the conceptual overlap between Hofstede's dimension of uncertainty acceptance vs. avoidance, Schwartz's (2004) distinction between conservatism vs. affective autonomy (reflecting values such as social order, obedience, exciting life) and partly, Inglehart's (1997) distinction between self-expression vs. survival (reflecting values such (in)tolerance and (in)security).

Differences in the uncertainty avoidance of national cultures were very useful to understand specific problems in a variety of domains. For example, in the domain of online trust and privacy, Bellman et al. (2004) did a global survey among internet users from 38 countries. They found that differences in

information privacy concerns could indeed be explained by some of the cultural dimensions indicated by Hofstede (2001). More specifically, individualistic, low uncertainty avoidant cultures were comfortable with disclosing private information of higher levels than collectivistic high uncertainty avoidant cultures. In the domain of public health, Wallace et al. (2019), who analyzed data for 87 countries over 25 years, and Tekeş et al. (2019) noted that high BMI and obesity were associated with relatively high uncertainty avoidant national cultures. Recently, Messner and Payson (2021) explored panic buying in consumer behavior during the COVID-19 outbreak (data collected from February to March 2020). The dataset consisted of Google mobility reports of individuals from 131 countries. They found that country-level individualism and uncertainty avoidance enforced the degree of panic buying, that is, the number and duration of visits to grocery and pharmacy stores.

Building on these empirical surveys and qualitative syntheses, the assumption made is that the uncertainty avoidance dimension is a useful characteristic of cultural variation, especially because it is more sensitive to societal change (Premise 1).

### **Gender and Age**

Taken as a whole, cultural value-oriented studies focussed on group facets in a society with marginal attention for distinctive individual characteristics such as education, age, and gender. Hofstede (2001) argued that in the collective mental programming like nationality, gender is an unconscious involuntary characteristic of a cultural group member. He identified the masculinity/femininity cultural dimension, which reflected that men have been programmed with tougher values and women with more tender values, which varies across different national cultures of countries. Note that this dimension is related to but not the same as gender differences. Several extant studies used Hofstede's dimension indexes as anchor points for their country's comparisons of age and gender.

Regarding the association between gender and uncertainty avoidance, Naghavi et al. (2021) investigated the corporate decision-making process of company boards. Their dataset covered a 10-year-period for 255 companies based in 46 countries. They found that the degree of uncertainty avoidance (identified for a national culture) enforced a positive effect on company board diversity, that is, more women on the board of directors increased the performance of a firm. In a similar vein, Murphy et al.'s (2021) investigations, based on 85 countries, found that gender differences in personality are different per culture. Specifically, in individualistic countries, men on average, tend to score higher on measures of emotional stability than women.

Regarding the association between age and uncertainty avoidance, Lawrie et al. (2020) researched 43 countries for the subjective well-being of their individuals. In countries with higher uncertainty avoidance, higher the age, lower the perception of well-being older age was associated with lower perceived well-being. This was not found for countries with lower uncertainty avoidance. Recently, during the COVID-19 period, Koch and Park (2022) investigated whether psychological distress could be predicted from individual-level demographic characteristics. Data from 27 countries (collected from June to August 2020) showed that country health systems with containment and closure policies caused more psychological distress in women and older individuals than in men and younger individuals. In a similar vein, Ackerman and Chopik (2021) investigated cultural variation in subjective age. National cultures of 68 different countries with Hofstede's dimension scores were compared. In countries with higher uncertainty avoidance, there was a smaller perceived subjective age discrepancy compared to countries with lower uncertainty avoidance. Specifically, women and older adults reported a larger gap between their chronological age and the age they felt.

Against this background, it is evident that the degree of uncertainty avoidance is influenced by the individual-level characteristics of gender (Premise 2) and age (Premise 3).

### Indicators of Culture

The flourishing culture dimensions perspective initiated many productive dialogues dealing with the polarisation of cultural differences, assumptions of national uniformity, and individual variations within and between countries (Beugelsdijk et al. 2015, Inglehart 2018, Schwartz 2014, Smith & Bond 2019, Tarabar 2019). A recurring theme is the equation of culture with country and nationality. Taras et al. (2016) questioned the appropriateness of the use of the country as a proxy for culture. Their meta-analysis included 558 studies covering 32 countries. Oftentimes, it is justified to refer to the culture of a country, but cross-country cultural differences will increasingly converge. They contend that cross-cultural investigations should not focus exclusively on cultures of countries and should consider specific socio-economic classes, professions, age cohorts, etc., with commonalities in the degree of wealth, (in)stability, or globalization). Recently, Akaliyiski et al. (2021) went into the "nationology" of culture. Their study supported the significance of investigating and comparing national cultures, evidenced with empirical data from the World Values Survey. Additionally, they argue for a distinctive conceptualization of national culture. As a political entity, "the nation" has a cultural gravity center with concentric circles of individual-level cultural values. These circles are clusters that contain, for instance, diverse ethnolinguistic and socio-demographic categories (including education, age, and gender) of individuals.

Specifically, within Hofstede's cultural value theory, national culture referred to the most dominant culture within a nation or country. Specific groups were identified through the questions "What is your nationality?" and "What was your nationality at birth (if different)?" (Hofstede & Minkov 2013). There are several other options for indicators that can be used as metrics of culture. Broeder and Extra (1999) noted that groups in a multicultural society can be defined and identified in terms of different criteria, namely nationality, birth-country, self-categorization, and the language spoken at home. These criteria have several advantages and disadvantages when used for the classification of cultural groups. The first identification criterion, nationality, likely coincides with the categorization that underlies the "passport" approach in cross-cultural values studies (Taras et al. 2016). Strictly speaking, nationality is a juridical criterium, that is, the passport of a person. The second identification, birth-country of a person, can be combined with the parents' country of birth to indicate a person's country of origin. The latter is the official categorization that is often applied in official (census) population statistics. Information about the nationality and birth-country is objective and relatively easy to establish. However, it becomes less valid over time because of intergenerational erosion, that is, naturalization and births within the countries of residence. In addition, this information is not always indicative of ethnicity and identity. It is determined that the dynamics in society are not considered.

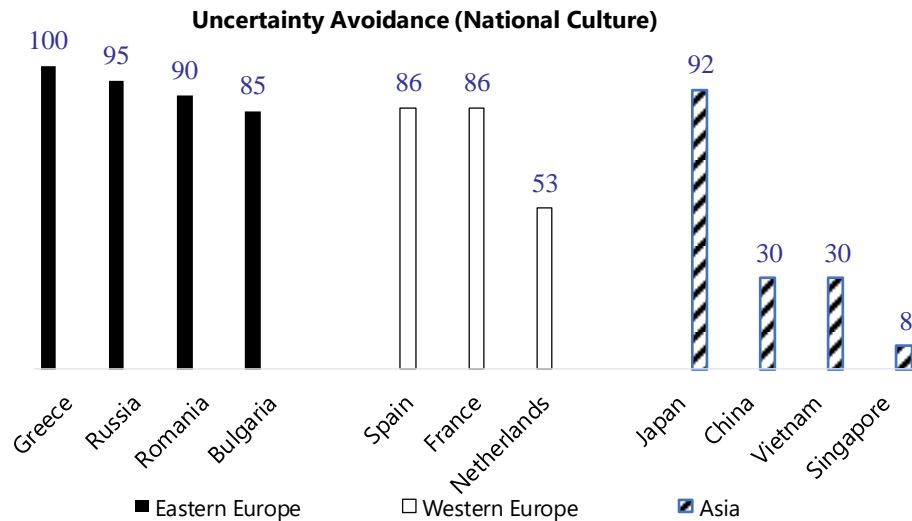
Given the decreasing significance of the nationality and birth-country criteria, collecting reliable information about the composition of the ethnic population groups was a challenging task the demographers in Europe faced (Extra & Yağmur 2004). Complementary or alternative criteria have been suggested in various countries with a longer immigration history, and, for this reason, with a history of collecting census data on multicultural population groups. In countries such as Australia, Canada, and the US, census questions have been phrased in terms of self-categorization and language use at home. Ethnic identification through self-categorisation ("To what ethnic group do you belong?"), touches the heart of the cultural matter. It is emancipatory because it takes into account the person's own conception of ethnicity and identity (Broeder & Extra 1999).

Against this background, it is anticipated that the ethnic self-identification of individuals is an appropriate way for distinguishing cultural groups, or more precisely, ethnic groups.

### Methodology

We researched factors that influenced the behavioral intentions of consumers online. In these investigations, the dimension uncertainty avoidance was used to understand cultural differences in online

behavior. Cross-cultural comparisons were made for a variety of factors in consumer behavior, such as trust and privacy (Broeder 2020), color (Broeder & Van Doremalen 2021), and celebrity endorsement (Broeder & Goorden 2019). In all these investigations (including 11 groups), the scale given by Jung and Kellaris (2004) was used to measure uncertainty avoidance. In the present study, the values of this scale are combined and analyzed further for the demographic factors of gender and age. Before we go into the details of the method and empirical findings of this synthesis in the present study, Figure 2 indicates the differences in the uncertainty avoidance for these 11 groups according to Hofstede's international Values Survey Module 2013 (Hofstede & Minkov 2013).



**Figure 2. Hofstede's (2022) Uncertainty Avoidance of National Culture ("What is your nationality?"). Max.=100 for Strong Avoidant Country**

Figure 2 shows that Greece, Russia, and Japan have national cultures with the highest uncertainty avoidance. The highest uncertainty tolerant countries are China, Vietnam, and Singapore, the last of which is remarkably low on the scale. The Eastern European countries seem to be relatively high in uncertainty avoidance, compared to Western European and Asian countries. The levels of uncertainty avoidance of the national culture of the Netherlands in Western Europe, Japan, and Singapore in Asia are remarkable outliers.

### Data Collection

In the 2017–2019 period, a total of 5,126 members of 11 groups participated in a series of cross-cultural investigations. An online questionnaire was filled in by 5,126 persons, including 11 different cultural groups from Eastern Europe, Western Europe, and Asia. The groups were distinguished based on ethnic self-identification. Henceforth, we will refer to them as ethnic groups. The final sample used in the analyses consisted of 4,888 participants. Data were not analyzed from 238 persons. The mismatch between birth-country and ethnic self-identification was included in the exclusion criteria. For example, Dutch born in Belgium, Chinese born in Singapore, or Romanians born in the Netherlands were not included. In addition, outliers for age were not included, that is, respondents younger than 18 or older than 57 years. There were 2,016 (41%) male and 2,872 (59%) female respondents. The mean age was 26 years (age range 18–57 years) and the reported education level of most participants was higher education or university. Table 1 gives an overview of the gender and age distribution per ethnic group.

**Table 1. Gender and Average Age with Standard Deviation (SD) per Ethnic Group**

Region	Group	Total	Male	Female	Age (SD)
Eastern Europe	Greek	419	180	239	29.14 (6.68)
	Russian	192	81	111	24.37 (5.71)
	Romanian	133	72	61	26.41 (6.51)
	Bulgarian	126	58	68	24.87 (4.35)
Western Europe	Spanish	276	69	207	25.80 (6.24)
	French	310	136	174	23.22 (4.98)
	Dutch	2,507	1,048	1,459	25.34 (7.05)
Asia	Japanese	206	94	112	28.09 (8.94)
	Chinese	416	158	258	23.47 (4.51)
	Vietnamese	140	57	83	24.18 (4.88)
	Singaporean	163	63	100	32.19 (8.35)
N total		4,888	2,016	2,872	25.72 (6.92)

### Procedure and Measures

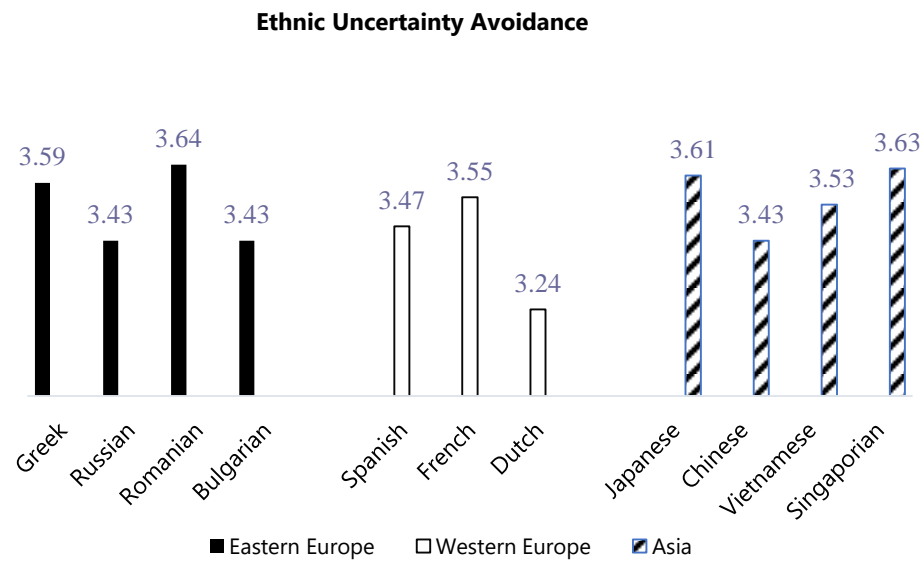
Participants gave their informed consent and answered an online questionnaire (Qualtrics) covering the following background information: age, gender, and education level ("What is the highest education level that you have completed?"). In addition, culture-related information referred to the birth-country ("What country were you born in?"), country of residence ("In what country do you live at the moment?"), and ethnic self-identification ("To what ethnic group do you belong?"). Uncertainty avoidance of the respondents was measured using a scale developed by Jung and Kellaris (2004) based on Hofstede's dimension. The items addressed the following information:

- The degree of rule orientation: "I prefer structured situations to unstructured situations", "I prefer specific instructions to broad guidelines", and "I believe that rules should not be broken for mere, pragmatic reasons".
- The degree of tension: "I tend to get anxious easily when I don't know an outcome", "I feel stressed when I cannot predict consequences", and "I don't like ambiguous situations".

One item of the original scale of Jung and Kellaris (2004) was not considered. This item addressed risk avoidance ("I would not take risks when an outcome cannot be predicted") and was not included because it did not fall under Hofstede's dimension of uncertainty avoidance (see Alipour 2019 for a discussion of the incorrect inclusion of risk-avoidance under uncertainty avoidance). Answers were given on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" (=1) to "Strongly agree" (=5). A reliability analysis was carried out on the uncertainty avoidance scale comprising six items. Cronbach's alpha showed that in this study, the scale reached acceptable reliability,  $\alpha=.75$ . All six items appeared to be worthy of retention, resulting in a decrease in the alpha if deleted (with  $\alpha=.56$  for the set of rule-oriented items and  $\alpha=.73$  for the set of tension-related items).

### Results

For the ethnic groups in the present study the degree of uncertainty avoidance, measured with the adapted Jung & Kellaris (2004) scale, is presented in Figure 3. Interestingly, the emerging pattern is different than the one emerging from Hofstede's operationalisation of uncertainty avoidance, shown in Figure 2. The ethnic groups with the highest uncertainty avoidance are Romanian, Japanese and, Singaporean. Also differently, the highest uncertainty tolerant countries are now: Russian, Bulgarian, Chinese, and Dutch. The last ethnic group, from the Netherlands, is again remarkable low on this uncertainty avoidance scale.



**Figure 3. Uncertainty Avoidance of Ethnic groups ("To what ethnic group do you belong?"). Mean Scores on a 5-point-scale: Min.=1 for Tolerant and Max.=5 for Strong Avoidant**

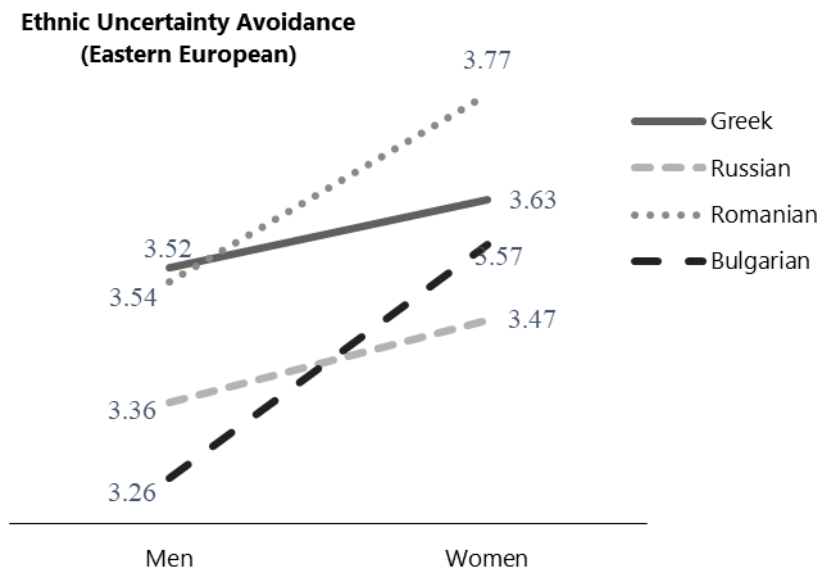
For each ethnic group separate simple moderation analyses were performed with Hayes' (2018) procedures (model 1). Gender was entered as the independent variable. Uncertainty avoidance was the dependent variable. The variable age was entered as the moderator. Education level was entered as a co-variate. For all statistical tests an alpha level of .05 was applied. The significance of the effects was tested with bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) confidence intervals (CI) based on 5000 bootstrap samples. The confidence intervals should be entirely above or below zero.

### Eastern Europe

The average uncertainty avoidance values in decreasing order for the Eastern European groups were as follows: Romanian ( $M=3.64$ ,  $SD=.65$ ), Greek ( $M=3.59$ ,  $SD=.58$ ), Russian ( $M=3.43$ ,  $SD=.62$ ), and Bulgarian ( $M=3.43$ ,  $SD=.66$ ). Figure 4 shows the differences between the male and the female participants for the Eastern European groups.

The mean values in Figure 4 show that for all groups the women were more uncertainty avoidant than the men. The Romanian women had the highest level of uncertainty avoidance ( $M=3.77$ ,  $SD=.57$ ), whereas the Bulgarian men had the lowest level of uncertainty avoidance ( $M=3.26$ ,  $SD=.66$ ). However, for the Greek, Russian, and Romanian group no statistically significant effects of gender and age were found.

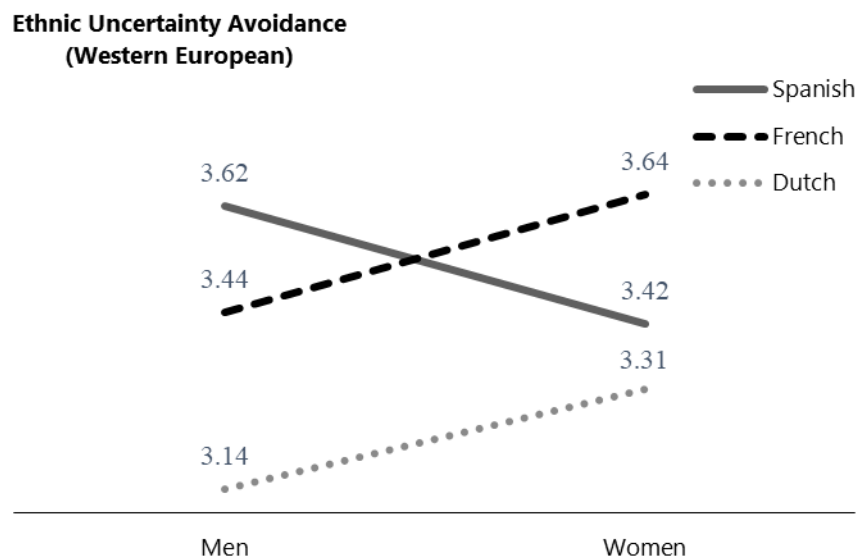
For the Bulgarian group the overall regression model was nearly significant ( $R^2=.07$ ,  $F(4, 121)=2.22$ ,  $p=.07$ ) with a significant main effect for gender ( $b=.31$ ,  $p=.01$ , 95% BCa CI [.07, .54]). There was no significant main effect for age ( $b=-.02$ ,  $p=.31$ , 95% BCa CI [-.05, .01]). This means that the Bulgarian women were more uncertainty avoidant than the Bulgarian men. This concerns the younger as well as the older Bulgarians.



**Figure 4. Gender and Uncertainty Avoidance of the Eastern European Ethnic Groups. Mean Scores on a 5-point-scale: Min.= 1 for Tolerant and Max.=5 for Strong Avoidant**

#### Western Europe

The average uncertainty avoidance values in decreasing order for the Western European groups were as follows: French ( $M=3.55$ ,  $SD=.62$ ), Spanish ( $M=3.47$ ,  $SD=.61$ ), and Dutch ( $M=3.24$ ,  $SD=.63$ ). Figure 5 gives an overview of the male and the female participants in the Western European groups.



**Figure 5. Gender and Uncertainty Avoidance of the Western European Ethnic Groups. Mean Scores on a 5-point-scale: Min.= 1 for Tolerant and Max.= 5 for Strong Avoidant**



The mean values in Figure 5 show that for the French group and the Dutch group the women were more uncertainty avoidant than the men. In contrast, the Spanish men were more uncertainty avoidant than the Spanish women. The French women had the highest level of uncertainty avoidance ( $M=3.64$ ,  $SD=.62$ ), whereas the Dutch men had the lowest level of uncertainty avoidance ( $M=3.14$ ,  $SD=.64$ ).

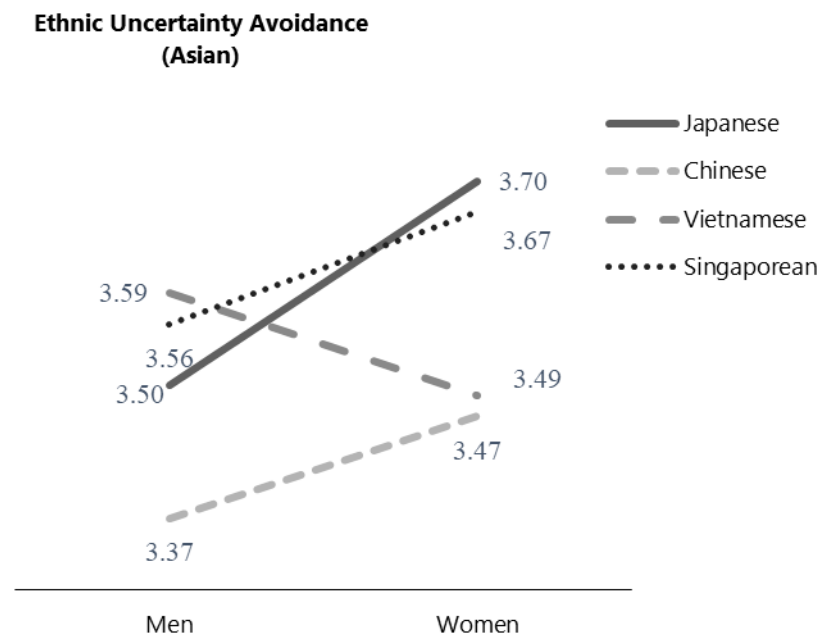
For the Spanish group no statistically significant effects of gender and age emerged in the regression analysis.

In contrast, for the French group the overall regression model was nearly significant ( $R^2=.03$ ,  $F(4, 305)=2.33$ ,  $p=.05$ ) with a significant main effect for gender ( $b=.18$ ,  $p=.02$ , 95% BCa CI [.40, .32]). There was no significant main effect for age ( $b=-.01$ ,  $p=.54$ , 95% BCa CI [-.02, .01]). This means that the French women were more uncertainty avoidant than the French men. This concerned the younger as well as the older French.

The Dutch group in this study was relatively large with 2507 members (see Table 1). For the Dutch group the overall regression model was significant ( $R^2=.02$ ,  $F(4, 2502)=12.226$ ,  $p<.00$ ) with a significant main effect for gender ( $b=.16$ ,  $p<.00$ , 95% BCa CI [.11, .21]). There was no significant main effect for age.

### Asia

The average uncertainty avoidance values in decreasing order for the Asian were as follows: Singaporean, ( $M=3.63$ ,  $SD=.63$ ), Japanese ( $M=3.61$ ,  $SD=.61$ ), Vietnamese ( $M=3.53$ ,  $SD=.53$ ), and Chinese ( $M=3.43$ ,  $SD=.64$ ). The average uncertainty avoidance for the male and the female participants in the Asian groups are shown in Figure 6.



**Figure 6. Gender and Uncertainty Avoidance of the Asian Ethnic groups. Mean Scores on a 5-point-scale: Min.=1 for Tolerant and Max.=5 for Strong Avoidant**

On average in three Asian groups (Japanese, Singaporean, and Chinese) the women were more uncertainty avoidant than the men. In contrast, in the Vietnamese group the men were more uncertainty

avoidant than the women. The Japanese women had the highest level of uncertainty avoidance ( $M=3.70$ ,  $SD=.52$ ), whereas the Chinese men had the lowest level of uncertainty avoidance ( $M=3.37$ ,  $SD=.64$ ).

In the regression analysis for the Chinese and Vietnamese groups no statistically significant gender and age effects were found. So there was no difference in uncertainty avoidance between the Chinese men and women, as well as between the Vietnamese men and women.

For the Japanese group the overall regression model was not significant ( $R^2=.03$ ,  $F(4, 201)=1.40$ ,  $p=.23$ ), but with a significant main effect for gender ( $b=.19$ ,  $p=.00$ , 95% BCa CI [.03, .35]). There was no significant main effect for age ( $b=.00$ ,  $p=.66$ , 95% BCa CI [-.01, .02]). This means that the Japanese women were more uncertainty avoidant than the Japanese men. This concerned the younger as well as the older Japanese.

Finally, for the Singaporean group the overall regression model was significant ( $R^2=.07$ ,  $F(4, 158)=3.03$ ,  $p=.02$ ) with no significant main effect for gender ( $b=.15$ ,  $p=.13$ , 95% BCa CI [-.06, .35]). However, there was a significant main effect for age ( $b=.02$ ,  $p=.01$ , 95% BCa CI [.01, .03]). This means that the older Singaporean men and women were more uncertainty avoidant than the younger Singaporean.

### Discussion and Implications

This is one of the first known studies exploring uncertainty avoidance of ethnically self-identified (cultural) groups differentiated by age and gender.

With respect to ethnic differentiation, a substantial variation in the levels of uncertainty avoidance was observed across the different ethnic groups (Premise 1). The most uncertainty avoidant ethnic groups were Asian (Singaporean and Japanese) and Eastern European (Romanian and Greek). The most uncertainty tolerant ethnic groups were Western European (Dutch), two Eastern European (Bulgarian and Russian), and an Asian ethnic group. These groups showed the same level of uncertainty tolerance. The relative uncertainty avoidance order differentiated by ethnic self-identification is very different from the uncertainty avoidance ranking of national cultures (Hofstede 2022).

With reference to gender, the assumption was made that uncertainty avoidance is related to gender (Premise 2). Indeed, the findings of this study provide empirical evidence that on average, women are more uncertainty avoidant than men. The gender difference was statistically significant for five ethnic groups, namely Bulgarian, French, Dutch, Japanese, and Chinese. The opposite was found for the Spanish and Vietnamese ethnic groups: their women were more uncertainty tolerant. No statistically significant differences emerged between men and women in the Greek, Russian, Romanian, and Singaporean ethnic groups.

Relating to age, it was also assumed that older people are more uncertainty avoidant than younger ones (Premise 3). However, this assumption was not supported. There was no empirical basis for the ethnic group samples in this study. The effect of age was only evidenced with statistical significance for one ethnic group, the Singaporean.

In terms of cultural diversity in the dynamics within and between societies, there is no single, straightforward road to a solution for the cultural identification problem. In the backdrop of cultural diversity, different criteria may complement and strengthen each other. Nascent studies make congruent arguments, with empirical support that for distinguishing groups in cross-cultural comparisons, the usage of country (Taras et al. 2016) and nationality (Alkaliyski et al. 2021) are still germane, and oftentimes effective.

In this study, ethnic groups were distinguished by profiles based on birth-country and self-identification criteria. These multiple identification criteria have proven to be highly valid for defining cultural groups in Asia (Broeder & Stokmans 2013), Europe (Extra & Yagmur 2004), and South Africa (Plüddemann et al. 2004). Ethnic identification through self-categorization touches the heart of the cultural matter (Broeder & Extra 1999). Additionally, in these demolinguistic studies, cultural identification

through (home) language use is a significant criterion of ethnicity in communication processes. Language data are the cornerstones of government policies in areas such as public information or education. Further, language is often a core value of ethnicity and identity (Plüddemann et al. 2004).

### **Limitations and Further Investigations**

This study has some limitations that provide points for further investigations. The first limitation is due to the operationalization of uncertainty avoidance. In this research, a measurement scale developed by Jung and Kellaris (2004) was adapted. This scale consisted of a different set of questions than the one suggested by Hofstede's international Values Survey Module 2013 (Hofstede & Minkov 2013). To further elaborate on the previous limitation, the questionnaire in this research was created and distributed solely in English, whereas translations in several languages are available for Hofstede's questions (Hofstede & Minkov 2013). Second, the investigation of the present study was based on self-reported data from only 5,126 individuals covering only 11 different groups. Indeed, a very small data set, with a view to the cultural value-oriented studies that can be characterized as empirical approaches with a strong fascination for very large data sampling. Third, the ecological fallacy (Messner 2016, Winzar 2015) to keep in mind is that ethnically self-identified cultural identification criteria generalize between groups. The explanation of observable behavior patterns should accept variation among individual group members as well as the relative importance of competing cultural values in country-specific and nation-specific contexts. Finally, increasing processes of globalization and migration imply the increasing trend towards naturalization and births within the countries of residence. Nationality and birth-country will become less valid over time as criteria for identifying group memberships. Therefore, the combined criterion of ethnic self-categorization and (home) language use is a potentially promising long-term alternative in cross-cultural investigations.

### **Conclusion**

Distinguishing groups and memberships through self-categorization can be a valuable method for disentangling the continuous complexity of cultural diversity. On a whole, this study's ethnic group profiles suggest that women are more uncertainty avoidant than men, regardless of their age. The study points to the importance of self-categorization as an indicator of ethnic groups. This type of ethnic identification is related to the commonly used cultural value of uncertainty avoidance. The perceived difference in uncertainty avoidance across ethnic groups is believed to be inherent in the human experience and expectations as well as in predicting human behavior.

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## The Wanderlust generation: determining factors on millennial consumers' responses to travel advertisements

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The purpose of the study is to determine factors influencing millennial consumers' response towards travel packages and services advertised online. Analyzing data from the Philippines using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling, results indicate that consumer awareness influences purchase decision while consumer awareness affects consumer perception. Moreover, consumer perception has a significant influence on purchase decision. The findings in this study can be the basis of managers and marketing communication practitioners for producing efficient online marketing communication programs, i.e., to launch informative advertisements that raise the millennial group's awareness about travel offerings, advertisements that establish positive impressions, and advertisements that translate buying interest to actual purchase.

**Keywords:** consumer awareness, consumer perception, consumer response, millennial consumers, travel industry

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### Introduction

Studying the consumers' attitudes toward advertising of any form have always been one of the advertisers' aims. Advertisements that effectively deliver their messages to their audiences can help endorse and build awareness of its offerings. With the fast growth of information technologies globally in the past decade, advertisers seemingly depend on several modes of interactive technology to promote their products and services (Eisend & Tarrahi 2016). Moreover, the idea of launching current and entertaining content could get consumers to interact electronically effectively. These powerful features are seen as a forthcoming of advertising. Advertising become more figurative in consumers' perspective than television advertising as a marketing stimulus that stands out as compared to others in their environment (Yaakop & Hemsley-Brown 2013). Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and others have



become avenues for marketing practitioners to engage their promotional activities (Arceo et al. 2018). However, research studies about online advertisements and how they are perceived by a group of primary users, the Millennials, are relatively limited, especially in the Philippines. Also, little is known about how factors influence Internet users' attitudes toward online advertising quantitatively. On the other hand, capital investments in online advertising are often targeted mistakenly due to lack of familiarity, and limited research is done on consumers' sensitivity to online advertising. Scenarios causing advertisers to choose the wrong advertisement characteristics and platforms, send imprecise messages, and not recognize the target audience (Campbell et al. 2011). The Millennials, the wanderlust generation (Slater 2019), are being influenced by several associated factors such as the Internet (technology adoption), specifically when it comes to their perception and attitude to travel options and the environment (Jamal & Newbold 2020). And as the Internet is becoming a powerful medium to capture millennial consumers' interest, online advertising is necessary for businesses aiming for wider or global reach, including the travel industry. Many people in the travel industry realized that they needed to try more modern techniques in marketing; marketing the travel industry can be done in several ways (Rasty, Chou & Feiz 2013).

This study is based on the Consumer Perception Theory—how the consumer receives, selects, organizes, and interprets information to create meaning. Perception depends on internal factors such as someone's beliefs, involvements, needs, moods, and outlook. This theory is effective when creating a campaign or a message for a product or a brand (Belch & Belch 2018).

The purpose of the study is to determine what levels of association can be measured between the relationships of the factors affecting Filipino Millennial consumers' response to online travel advertisements? Specifically, we determine the relationship between advertisement informativeness and consumer awareness; consumer awareness and consumer perception; and, consumer perception and purchase decision. In the following section, we present the theoretical framework and hypothesis development, methodology, analysis and results, followed by discussion and implication for managers. We also discuss limitations of the study and directions for future research.

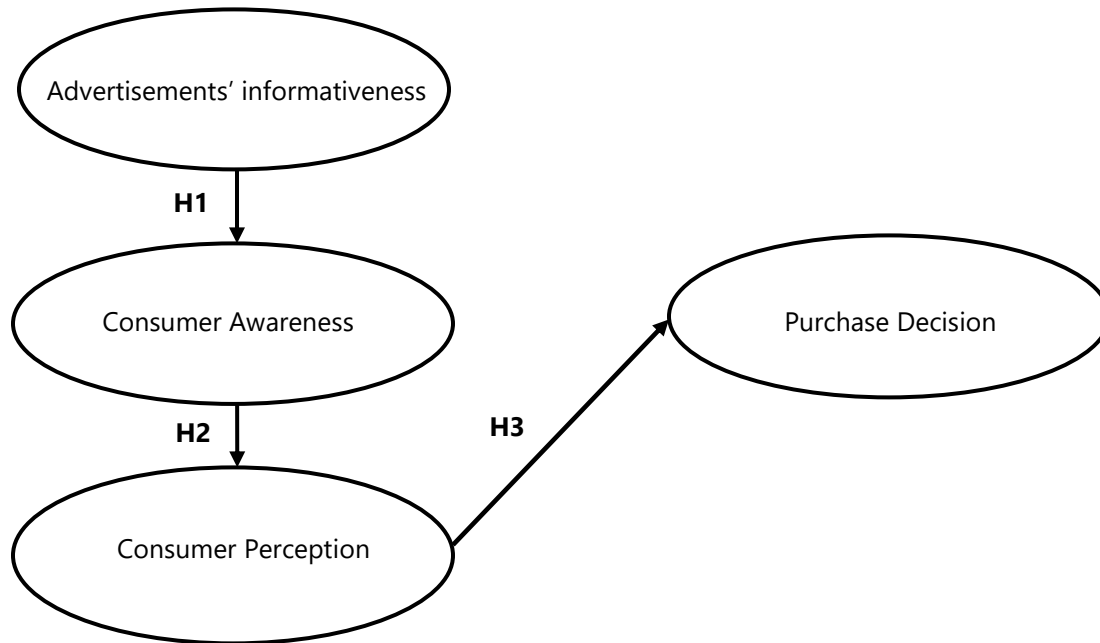
### **Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development**

This research is anchored to the Consumer Perception Theory and Consumers Response Theory. The perceptual process in marketing is the consumer being influenced by stimuli such as what is seen in adverts. Then they develop a sensation from these, thus drawing their attention, interpreting these stimuli, and generating a response. The consumers determine this response's scheme, defined by Solomon (2010) as 'organized collections of beliefs and feelings. Alternatively, consumers' set of reactions after seeing, hearing, or reading the message is known as a response. Consumer response can range from non-observable activities such as storing information in memory to observable actions such as actual product purchases or even spreading the news to friends, etc. (Belch & Belch 2018). Following relevant literature review, the following conceptual model has been developed. The research framework is based on the premise that informativeness generates consumer awareness, which impacts consumer perception and influences consumers' purchase decisions. Figure 1 depicts the general consumer response process dimensions.

#### **Millennial Consumers**

Millennials or also known as *Generation Me* and *Echo Boomers*, are the demographic cohort following Generation X. There are no particular dates for when this group starts or ends; demographers usually refer to the early 1980s as starting birth years and ending birth years ranging from the mid-1990s to early 2000s. Authors like William Strauss and Neil Howe broadly endorsed the Millennial group's naming (Horovitz 2012). Firms today are competing for millennial mindshare as millennials have a significant

impact on older groups and are trendsetters across all business industries, from fashion to food (Schawble 2015). Businesses have been hostile in connecting with this generation, for traditional advertising methods have proven ineffectual to capture their attention and response.



**Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework**

*Source: the authors*

### **Advertisement Informativeness and Consumer Awareness**

Informative content was vital for Internet advertising. Most consumers recognize the Internet as an information source (Bibi et al. 2016). Informativeness can be viewed as the fulfillment of consumers' longing for awareness about a product and gives marketers a chance to show different products and services by dispensing important information through advertising (Gao & Koufaris 2006). Shimp and Andrews (2014) emphasize some of the advantages of online advertisements, including individualization, interactivity, cost-efficiency, and immediate publishing. Today, consumers have more access to marketing communications online. Online advertisements perform many functions for companies. Since then, traditional media used in advertising such as television, radio, magazines, and newspapers serve advertisers' needs. However, there has been an effort in the advertisers and their industry to locate new media that are more cost-efficient, less cluttered, and more effective – which online advertising does (Shimp & Andrews 2014). As the Internet is becoming a standard internet platform, the Web offers interactive rich media tools and global reach to advertisers (Gupta 2013). Our first hypothesis is:

*H1. Advertisement informativeness leads to consumer awareness.*

### **Consumer Awareness and Consumer Perception**

High brand awareness could promote positive perception among consumers. The higher the awareness is, the higher the trust and the purchase of intentions consumers can feel. Moreover, consumer awareness can be seen as the degree to which consumers consider a product or a brand when a provided product category is mentioned and distinguish the features of a product or a brand instinctively. Also, the more positive consumer awareness is, the greater the influence on perceived quality, which specifies that

awareness has an undeviating positive effect on perception (Liao et al. 2011). On the other hand, Shahid et al. (2017) argued that consumers prefer to buy products and brands they are aware of. They also argued that a consumer is hesitant to purchase unfamiliar products. Before buying anything, consumers tend to do the market research or rely on someone he trusts and be well aware of what, how, and where to buy. As both consumer awareness and customer perception play an essential role in consumer buying behavior (Modak et al. 2016), it was determined that consumer's knowledge and awareness with respect to online advertising resolute their perception and attitude (Dehling 2019). And consumers with a high degree of awareness tend to show an optimistic level of perception towards ads and products. Our second hypothesis is:

*H2. Consumer awareness leads to consumer perception.*

### **Consumer Perception and Purchase Decision**

Online advertisements almost influence the respondents in purchasing a product and play an essential role in consumers' buying decision process (Saravanan & Sajitha 2016). Their research also mentioned that most of the respondents believe that online advertising is a dependable medium. There could be diverse phases consumers can go through, from being unconscious to actual purchase behavior (Hanekom 2007). However, suppose there will be considerations into Henekom's use of the consumer response process. In that case, the research result shows that online ads have a substantial impact on Millennial consumers' cognition (awareness) and affect (feelings and desire) with a degree of influence on consumers' behavior (actual purchase or trial adaption). Wee et al. (2014) also viewed that consumers' perception will impact behavioral intentions and actual purchase of the products. It was also determined that in the perspective of online retail and advertising, consumer perception, constituting behavioral attitudes on online commerce platforms, augment buying intentions and purchase (Hajli et al. 2017). Our final hypothesis is:

*H3. Consumer perception leads to purchase decision.*

## **Methodology**

### **Instrument and Data Collection**

The primary data were attained through the use of questionnaires (5-pt scale) after pilot testing on five respondents. The authors developed items for the questionnaire that involve a distinctive set of questions based on the variables' concepts. The question items were grounded on the descriptions of the variables defined by marketing references and authors including Babin and Harris' (2018) definition of Consumer Awareness (CA) and Consumer Perception (CP) and Belch & Belch's (2018) definition of Consumer Perception (CP) and Advertisement Informativeness (AI). The questionnaire was translated into an electronic format (Google Form), in which links that land respondents to the electronic questionnaire were distributed via electronic mail and messaging platforms. A total of 120 invitations were distributed online with an 83.33% response rate or a total of 100 respondents. The members of the sample were selected via purposive sampling from the population.

### **Analysis**

We adopted a PLS approach to Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to analyze the gathered data as this method is more advisable and considered as most suitable method for testing the causal relation (Hair et al. 2011). We used Ordinal Logistic Regression to predict the dependent variable with 'ordered' multiple categories and independent variables. This study measured dependent variables (having multiple ordered

levels) with multiple independent variables. With the identified set of variables, respondents' purchase decisions (dependent variable) were measured through a 5-pt Likert scale where 1 being strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 undecided, 4 agree, and 5 strongly agree.

### Reliability and Convergent Validity

Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and AVE results are presented in Table 1. It shows that the statistics for Cronbach's alpha ranged between .71 to .92, and for composite reliability between .87 to .95, an acceptable range for reliability. Moreover, AVE should be equal to or more than .5 (Fornell & Larcker 1981). In this study, all AVE results are more than in the acceptable range.

**Table 1. Reliability, Convergent Validity and Average Variance Extracted**

Variables	Indicators	Loadings	AVE	CR	$R^2$	Cronbach Alpha
AI	AI1	.89	.82	.93	-	.89
	AI2	.92				
	AI3	.90				
CA	CA1	.95	.90	.95	.43	.89
	CA2	.95				
CP	CP1	.85	.69	.94	.34	.92
	CP2	.87				
	CP3	.90				
	CP4	.84				
	CP5	.88				
	CP6	.70				
	CP7	.77				
PD	PD1	.84	.77	.87	.70	.71
	PD2	.91				

### Discriminant Validity

We assessed the discriminant validity of this study through analysis of cross-loadings. If items "crossload," then their loading is higher for another construct than that it purports to measure, which is problematic (Chin 2010). Items should load high on the construct that they purport to measure but low on all other constructs. Based on the results, the loading of each variable in its respective construct is higher than the other constructs, confirming the constructs' discriminant validity.

### Structural Relationships

The criteria for evaluating the structural relationship model are squared multiple correlations ( $R^2$ ) and path co-efficient ( $\beta$ ) of each path. GoF, SRMR and NFI statistics for this study were .65, .09, and .70, respectively. Table 3 reports the correlations and across the variables.

**Table 3. Path Coefficients**

Variates	Advertisement Informativeness	Consumer Awareness	Consumer Perception	Purchase Decision	$R^2$
Advertisement Informativeness					
Consumer Awareness	.66				.44
Consumer Perception		.58			.33
Purchase Decision			.72		.51

### Results

Table 4 reports the results. Hypothesis 1—advertisement informativeness leads to consumer awareness—is accepted. Thus, the finding is validated by Bauer et al. (2005) in that information supply is the primary reason behind consumers approving advertising. It also strengthens Bibi et al. (2016) argument that informativeness is important for Internet advertising and that the market recognizes the Internet as an information source. Hypothesis 2—consumer awareness leads to consumer perception—is accepted. This supports Susilowati & Sari's (2020) research that high brand awareness could promote positive perception among consumers. This also coincides to the proposition that the more progressive consumer awareness is, the greater the effect on perceived quality, thus considering awareness having an undeviating positive effect on perception (Liao 2011). The strength of relationship corresponds Shahid et al. (2017) argument that buyers prefer to purchase products and brands they are familiar with. Hypothesis 3—Consumer perception leads to purchase decision—is accepted. This supports Saravanan and Sajitha's (2016) research on online advertisements almost influence the respondents in purchasing a product and play an essential role in consumers' buying decision process. While consumers go through different stages, from being unconscious to actual purchase behaviour. The research result shows that online ads have a substantial impact on Millennial consumers' cognition and affect (feelings and desire) and has a degree of influence on consumers' purchase decision (Hanekom 2007).

**Table 4. Significance of Path Coefficients**

Variables	$\beta$	Mean	SD	$p$	Hypotheses
Advertisement Informativeness → Consumer Awareness	.66	.66	.05	.00	H1. Accepted
Consumer Awareness → Consumer Perception	.58	.58	.06	.00	H2. Accepted
Consumer Perception → Purchase Decision	.72	.72	.04	.00	H3. Accepted

### Discussion

Classical principles of mass media advertising may not be applicable on the Internet. Advertisers should not take full advantage of the medium's capabilities to produce operative online advertisements (Gallagher et al. 2001). An equal chance for exposure to the target audience was given to both print and online ads. The same advertisements will be equally effective. Menon and Soman's (2002) find how stimulating consumers' interest to facilitate click-through online advertising emphasizes the formation of knowledge gaps in online advertising. An attribute of "clickability" of online advertising makes it relevant to understand why consumers will click an ad. It is like when curiosity is generated only when the gap is

moderate and controllable. Several researchers propose their conceptualizations of how consumers respond to online advertising, including Stern et al. (2002) conceptual model of online advertising, which includes the presentation and formation of image in consumer's mind by taking into respect the various message stimuli offered through the Internet. Rodgers & Thorson's (2000) integrated model identified four purposes of users as a determinant of ad exposure: researching, surfing, shopping, and communicating. The study also suggested how the advertisers' controlled elements affect consumer responses.

Advertising is often a pull strategy in promoting a product or service, usually designed to make proactive customers aware of the brand, change attitude, and stimulate good purchase intentions (Pereda 2014). Information and communication technologies impact many tourism advertising facets (Buhalis & Law 2008). Expansion of electronic social media is the Web's primary asset (Brogan & Smith 2009). Social media platforms have related a change in the locus of control in the creation processes of online tourism content, from mainly controlled by organizations and corporations towards a more inclusive online presence, which to a large extent is the expression of interaction and participation of end-users (Shih, 2009). The first generation of tourists to grow up with electronic information technology has been called *digital natives* (Prensky 2001) and the *Net generation* (Tapscott 2009).

Elements of consumer psychology such as consumer awareness, perception, and purchase intention play significant roles in consumer buying behavior (Modak et al. 2016). Online platforms and advertising engage consumers to incorporate constant views into the purchase decision-making (Hall et al. 2017). Abed (2018) claims that perceptions such as trust represent pertinent mechanisms to shape behavioral intention among consumers. Oliveira et al. (2017) illustrated that perception is contributory in persuading consumers' purchase intentions, and consumers having a positive level of perception exhibit a significant intent to purchase online. Because of online platforms such as social media applications, virtual purchases are progressively noticeable in the online community. Providing outstanding quality virtual experience is vital to support online consumers. The perceived structure of online advertising and the product and service value being established among consumers create experiences that significantly shape perception and purchase intention. These elements of the consumer perception process considerably impact consumers' purchases even in an e-commerce setting (Hsu et al. 2018).

### **Implication for Managers and Scholars**

With the results of this study, businesses in the travel industry can be provided with ideas as to what factors can motivate potential consumers to purchase and avail of travel packages and services offered online. The findings in this study could be their basis for formulating efficient online marketing communication programs. Marketing communication practitioners may launch ads that target the millennial group considering that majority of them are active online users and sharing a substantial part in the purchasing economy—driving informative ads to boost awareness, thus creating a chance to establish positive impressions and convert buying interest to actual purchase. As the Philippines Market submits to the call of online commerce, this study provides essential implications on online market players in travel and tourism.

As millennial consumers' perception and response to online advertising of the travel industry were examined- this study focuses on the quantitative understanding of perceptual and behavioral aspects of consumers. Purposive sampling was utilized for this study, and findings are not universal to the entire population. Future studies are encouraged to use probability sampling. In future studies, the researchers encourage qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve deeper insights into various purchase orientations for online customers. Therefore, future in-depth qualitative studies can help understand deeper motivations and meanings of relationships between the constructs. And as the data were gathered pre-pandemic, using the results of this research to other studies with the same concept but with a

different time context and setting (period during and post-pandemic) can be conducted. Latent variables such as consumer awareness, consumer perception, and purchase decisions are areas of consumer behavior that are interesting to tackle and explore with in-depth qualitative research techniques. On the other hand, informativeness as a characteristic of an ad can be viewed based on perspective. Research that will focus on a different point-of-view (eg different industry) implies and generates a different result; hence, finding an industry or advertising where informativeness can directly drive purchase decisions is an area of interest. Finally, analyzing relationships and differences among market segments using other multivariate statistics is helpful, such as ordinal logistics regression, revealing the market's behavioral patterns benefitting marketers' positioning strategy.

### **Scope and Limitations**

The research is limited to the cities of Metro Manila for where data were collected through online survey questionnaires from 100 millennial consumers who were predetermined as internet participants and active users with purchasing power. There have been no exact dates for the birth year of the millennial group, but researchers and demographers typically use the early 1980s as beginning birth years and ending birth years ranging from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. But to limit the study, the researchers intended to choose participants born from the year 1985 to 2000 who might be young professionals (Horovitz, 2012). Only working millennial consumers participated in the study, for they were pre-identified as income earners with purchasing capacities. An excess of 20 questionnaires served as a buffer for retrieval and other problems that might occur along the way. The data were also gathered pre-pandemic.

### **Conclusion**

This research concludes the relationship among factors influencing millennial consumers' response to travel adverts, which shows a significant association with the latent traits for the data. From the statistical treatment, it can be concluded that ads' informativeness has a strong relationship to consumer awareness. This indicates that consumers' awareness is being fed by the amount of information advertised online. It was also found out that there is a significant relationship between consumer awareness and consumer perception. Then it could be concluded that online advertisements' role in consumer awareness influences consumers' interest to purchase a product and that it plays a vital role in buying decision process among consumers. And that Informative content is deemed necessary for Internet advertising as it fulfills consumers' need for awareness about a product or a package of offerings.

The researchers' drive to pursue this study stems primarily from online advertising being a powerful marketing tool in today's generation. Online advertising can benefit business establishments, specifically the travel industry, with its advantages such as low cost, high reach, high credibility, accountability, ease of usage, and ability to reach a broader range of audience (Kallas 2017). With the increased use of broadband and general dissemination of internet services like YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, the researcher believes that there will be an increasing trend for online advertising to be adopted by companies as part of their promotional mix. Thus, showing the significance of this research topic to the target travel industry and many stakeholders. This can provide businesses with an idea of what factors can drive potential consumers to use this study as a basis for formulating effective online marketing communication strategies. This phenomenon should be taken advantage of, especially when considering the millennial group as part of their primary target audience. As online advertising seems to be in a never-ending development stage, authors did limited research on consumer perception and response to such marketing techniques. Hence, there is a need to draw the connection between factors that impact consumer perception and behavior to evaluate online marketing effectiveness, making this study beneficial to marketing communication practitioners. The academe may also use this research to reference

future studies as this provides gathered information about advertising, marketing, and consumer behavior. Students and researchers may also consider this as a reference for their future academic endeavors. It could also help them understand the phenomenon if they are to cite results from this research.

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## Corporate citizenship and organizational citizenship behavior: does Covid-19 affect the relationship?

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This research examines how COVID-19 has affected workers' behavior. Implementing Corporate Citizenship (CC) model, this study aimed to investigate the impact of COVID-19 Anxiety (CA) and COVID-19 Concern (COC) (acting as mediator) on Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and the influence of OCB on CC. Using the PLS-SEM model, we examined businesses in Colombia. Findings show CA has a positive direct impact on COC but a negative direct effect on OCB. Additionally, when COC serves as a mediator, CA positively affects CC. This research provides critical information to managers and practitioners about eliminating COVID-19's psychological effects on employees, particularly those in emerging markets and developing countries. When employees' anxiety levels increase, they get affected psychologically, and productivity is harmed. Also, when workers see their companies as good corporate citizens, they become good organizational citizens. Additional factors, like company size, cultural context, and countries comparisons, may be included in future studies.

**Keywords:** Corporate Citizenship, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, COVID-19

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### Introduction

The Businesses are mobilizing to reclaim public trust, manage various risks, and meet growing stakeholder expectations while maintaining profitability and competitiveness in a globalized environment. Consequently, Corporate Citizenship (CC) has received increased attention recently. The concept of CC has evolved and provided a significant evaluation of the relationship between corporations and society (Maignan & Ferrell 2000). CC is expanding beyond legal compliance, public relations, and charity, leading organizations to become a fundamental aspect of corporate governance, strategy, risk management, and reputation building. Nevertheless, few studies have examined strategic approaches in international business, focusing on emerging and developing countries where poverty, environmental issues, and institutional deregulation make a case for the need to conduct CC activities.

Covid-19 has brought issues linked to CC to businesses and organizations. The pandemic has put good and bad companies' behaviors and ethical commitments to the test, especially those related to CC. During this crisis, many businesses have not only avoided unethical business practices. Still, they have also taken a proactive role in different CC initiatives to provide immediate aid and support to the population. The current epidemic presents various significant possibilities for those that take a more thoughtful and wise approach to CC.

Given the context and crisis created by the pandemic, it is crucial to study social perceptions of this *new normality*, which has resulted in the closure of countries, developed a global paralysis, deactivated all economies, and imposed an intense lockdown and social isolation to protect the population. This scenario has also increased the population's awareness of their personal and social responsibilities. According to Lee (2020), most businesses perceive a decline in economic activity caused by the COVID-19 crisis, while smaller firms face financial and liquidity issues. Another critical feature is how teleworking, cost modification, and tax debt deferral are integrated into a strategy for continuing operations. All the variables integrated into this scenario affect employees' performance, citizenship behavior, and how society perceives companies' CC behavior. A firm with a real CC commitment reinforces the existing bond among all stakeholders. Covid-19 could offer a substantial opportunity for businesses to participate actively in CC; however, the epidemic has driven numerous companies out of business or to the brink of failure. The pandemic has aggravated various long-standing socio-economic challenges, such as poverty and inequality.

Concerning the impact on economic development, it is ascertained that people's confinement results in decreased demand for goods and services; industries that have been significantly affected are tourism, entertainment, sports, retail, and restaurants. Two significant outcomes affected the labor market; first, teleworking facilitated activities from home; second, the vulnerable sectors were excluded due to a lack of resources and internet connection. The workplace has been impacted with equivalent strength.

OCB, defined as employee discretionary behavior, contributes to the understanding of effectiveness in organizations; hence, it is evolving as vital for businesses' long-term viability (Ndoja & Malekar 2020). CC is gaining attention as companies disregard the socio-legal and environmental implications of unethical behavior in favor of economic performance. Therefore, all stakeholders will see businesses that implement sustainable CC programs positively. Several studies have evaluated the influence of CC on employees as stakeholders (Evans & Davis 2014, Mathew & Krishnatray 2011). However, few have assessed the relationship between COVID-19, OCB, and CC. A company's good citizenship practices promote OCB among its employees (Jain & Rizvi 2020).

Swaen & Maignan (2003) found that citizenship was examined from an organizational and corporate viewpoint in the marketing and management literature, using the concepts of OCB and CC, respectively. While OCB is concerned with workers' attempts to behave ethically in their workplace, CC identifies companies' activities to promote good citizenship in society (p. 3). We aim to discuss the relationship between COVID-19, OCB and CC.

## Literature Review

### COVID-19 Anxiety

The coronavirus caused an economic slowdown and a rise in unemployment. Employees face social, economic, health, and psychological pressures that affect their mental stability and work attitudes. Most studies have focused on medical and nursing personnel (Kalaitzaki et al. 2020). Nevertheless, people's attitudes toward returning to work, particularly their work attitudes and OCB, are not well understood. Investigating work attitudes during the COVID-19 epidemic is critical; work attitudes influence work and organizational behaviors, job performance, and organizational effectiveness (Wang 2008).

There seems to be a lack of literature addressing factors influencing employees' psychological impact and attitudes in the workplace during the pandemic. Therefore, it is critical to understand the extent and

factors underlying employees' work attitudes to identify the need for assistance programs to prevent mental disorders and promote positive work attitudes. The current business scenario constrains people's interaction, personally and socially, by restricting physical contact and business operations, resulting in negative emotional impacts because of isolation and persistent fear of contagion. Among the most prevalent changes are stress, depression, anxiety, sleeplessness, and dietary changes, which will have a medium and long-term effect, eroding the individuals' mental health, especially in the labor force.

*H1. CA is positively related to COC.*

Some studies have reported health issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, including depression, anxiety, insomnia, appetite, and others (Lai et al. 2020, Zhang et al. 2020). Also, job insecurity is another significant concern for the global employee population. All those elements affect employee attitudes negatively and impact the organizational environment and employees' behavior. Therefore, combined job insecurity and health issues impact job satisfaction and OCB (Keim et al. 2014).

According to Mahmoud et al. (2021), due to stress and uncertainty, employees reduce discretionary contributions in order to preserve resources rejecting or not engaging in activities they are not obligated to do, such as cooperation among co-workers, improving job performance, and being able and open to participate in training to improve their skills.

*H2. CA is positively related to OCB.*

### **Confidence Crisis Management (CCM)**

Job satisfaction is a term that refers to people's emotional emotions about their employment. The concept is essential since it pertains to employees' well-being (Gebauer & Lowman 2009). Theoretically, work performance is linked to job engagement, and to some extent, work satisfaction is a mixture of many attributes. Instead, overall work satisfaction is calculated as the sum of assessments of the job's different components (Macey & Schneider 2008). The five most frequently utilized components are job content, chances for development, supervision, compensation, and co-workers (Aziri 2011).

According to Lind & van den Bos (2002), individuals in uncertain environments want "fair" treatment from authorities. Therefore, an authority figure's perceived fairness would be relatively insignificant in stable circumstances or certainty but essential in uncertain situations. People feel worried about their future in unknown cases and want protection. Therefore, researchers have suggested that creating a positive atmosphere of cooperation, where people believe they have been treated fairly, is essential for guiding any challenging organizational transformation (Contreras & Gonzalez 2021).

*H3. CCM is positively related to OCB.*

Crises effect significantly impacts management teams' ability to make tough decisions (Tindale & Winget 2020). Team decisions are susceptible to the crisis impact. This is because concerns transform regular group functioning and thus make conventional treatments useless (Marks et al. 2001). Emerging and quickly changing information is associated with crises. In such circumstances, a typical strategy is to wait until all relevant information is available and make an educated choice. However, when options must be taken quickly in a crisis, such an approach is not feasible. For example, the pandemic resulted in significant changes in tourism; temporary airlines and hotels were closed, as were restaurants and rent-a-cars. These occurrences are impossible to recognize or even anticipate. Therefore, relevant information and data come from many sources and occur throughout time as crises unfold. When conflicting decisions include clear options between the collective and individual, they must practice self-control to choose to help the group (Martinsson et al. 2012).

*H4. CCM is positively related to CC.*

### COVID-19 Concern

COVID-19 has spread quickly across the globe, causing significant medical and economic problems that affect people's everyday lives. Impacts on mental health may be discovered thru different avenues, such as disease outbreaks, depression, and economic recession. According to Brooks et al. (2020), the pandemic has caused mental health issues. Based on research, COVID-19 is associated with more depressive, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress symptoms and a potential increase in sleep. Similarly, Ammerman et al. (2021) highlighted a rise in online mental-health-related issues and a connection between social isolation and the past months' suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts. In order to prevent the COVID-19 from spreading, several countries have shut down *non-essential* economic sectors that affect the international economy, creating an enormous disturbance (WTO 2020). Based on statistics presented by the Associated Press (2020, April 9), between January 2, 2020, and March 23, 2020, the S&P 500 fell 31.32 percent. From March 27, 2020, to April 3, 2020, 6,648,000 Americans filed for unemployment, the highest in U.S. history.

Economic recessions also correlate with a significant deterioration in mental health (Alhenaidi & Huijt 2020). For example, the Great Crisis of 2008 in the United States was strongly associated with anxiety, depression, and drug use for about three to four years after the recession ended (Forbes & Krueger 2019). In addition, researchers have studied the effects of social exclusion, social isolation, and loneliness caused by health issues. Consequently, the population can suffer increased sadness, anxiety, stress, psychological load, anxiety, disturbed sleep, and elderly suicide, perhaps due to increasing loneliness and separation (Brooks et al. 2020). According to Southwick & Southwick (2020), loneliness, social isolation, and living alone are positively associated with increased mortality risk. There are external threats to societal health, such as the impact COVID-19 is having on mental health, financial worry, and adherence to self-quarantine recommendations. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate COVID-19's impact on the labor population.

*H5. COC is positively related to OCB.*

### Organizational Citizenship Behavior

OCB refers to a group of behaviors that people accept and put into practice without being formally compensated. When an employee assists coworkers in a stable workplace operation, they demonstrate altruism. OCB is an individual's discretionary activity that constructively supports an organization (Organ & Ryan 1995). Scholars have given a lot of attention to OCB (Chiang & Hsieh 2012). According to Organ (1990), OCBs are a class of pro-organizational behaviors that can neither be enforced nor based on formal role obligations nor elicited by contractual guarantees of recompense. Employee OCBs are essential to organization performance since managers cannot predict all opportunities for employees' contributions, supervise all employees' behavior, or push employees into "going the extra mile" for the organization (p. 912). Employees' conscientiousness is demonstrated by their compliance with administrative regulations even when they are not being observed. In addition, the level of tolerance for an employee's discomfort demonstrates sportsmanship (Organ et al. 2006).

OCB differs from task performance or in-role behavior; it is more discretionary. Therefore, OCB cannot directly be associated with rewards to stimulate and promote a positive organizational climate in social psychology (Organ et al. 2006). Generally, researchers have concentrated on how OCB benefits both employees and organizations. For example, employees respond efficiently to the call of duty by assisting and mentoring coworkers, becoming involved and staying informed about the organization, speaking up and encouraging others, volunteering to take on additional responsibilities, and so on, and their supervisors reward them for doing so (Whiting et al. 2008). Similarly, when OCB is prevalent in the workplace, the organization becomes a more appealing workplace. Organizations benefit from OCB because it contributes to the development of social capital and *lubricates* the organization's social machinery, allowing it to function more effectively (Bolino et al. 2012). Aligned with those thoughts,

empirical researchers have found that OCB relates to team and organizational effectiveness indicators, including business performance, economic output, product quality, and customer support ratings (Podsakoff et al. 2009).

Therefore, OCB is mainly determined by psychological factors rather than an employee's knowledge, skills, and talents (Hoffman et al. 2007). Given that citizenship calls into question the foundations and functioning of fundamental institutions such as the market, the state, and civil society (Bendek 2002), OCBs have developed into a central moral tenet incorporated into some codes of ethical principles (Grit 2004). OCBs are intrinsically moral in how the individual chooses to engage in behaviors that benefit others (Peloza & Hassay 2006). Due to their critical role in promoting organizational effectiveness, efficiency, and success, OCBs have been intensively explored in ethical areas (Podsakoff et al. 2009).

Individual citizenship inside the firm—in which actions are referred to as "organizational citizenship behaviors" (OCBs)—is also considered critical for the company's longevity. According to some research, OCBs are consistently associated with organizational success (Organ et al. 2006). Workers may do OCBs in various ways, including partnering with others, orienting new employees, volunteering for additional work, and assisting others in their jobs. However, Lievens and Anseel (2004) stated that OCB should be examined in contexts other than the United States because the dimensionality of an OCB indicator may alter for different cultures.

*H6. OCB is positively related to CC.*

### **Corporate Citizenship**

Corporate citizenship has gained greater acceptance in the global community as a group of business practices that positively impact societies and business entities (Maignan & Ferrell 2000). CC was launched as a performance-based re-conceptualization of corporate social responsibility (Matten et al. 2003) and was characterized as the corporation's role in administering citizens' rights. CC is a kind of self-regulation incorporated into a company model (Lam 2009). It is described as an organization's participation in activities that seem to advance a social objective beyond what is required by law (Camacho & Salazar-Concha 2020).

Carroll (1998) defined CC as having four dimensions or faces: first, an economic face, in which a good corporate citizen is expected to be profitable; second, a legal face, in which a good corporate citizen is expected to follow the law; third, ethical faces, in which an excellent corporate citizen engages in ethical behavior; and fourth, philanthropic face, in which an ideal corporate citizen gives back. Maignan et al. (1999) defined how enterprises fulfill their stakeholders' economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary duties.

According to Maignan & Ferrell (2003), CC encompasses various actions, including financial support for staff education, promoting ethical programs, adopting environmentally sustainable practices, and sponsorship of community activities. Gardberg & Fombrun (2006) propose that citizenship programs are strategic investments on par with research, development, and advertising. Maignan et al. (1999) demonstrated that market-oriented and humanistic environments promote proactive CC. Furthermore, CC has shown positive benefits for businesses in marketing strategy, including differentiation strategies to increase sales profits (Siegel & Vitaliano 2007), connecting social contribution to product sales, consumer, or investor reactions to CC (Maignan & Ferrell 2004).

Nevertheless, there is a shortage of information concerning CC from an individual standpoint. The last issue is how being a good corporate citizen affects workers' citizenship inside or outside the firm. Given the critical role that workers play in creating and executing organizational policies and practices, it is helpful to research the intersection between CC and OCB, particularly in these times of pandemics.

Undoubtedly, CC is not a call for businesses to shoulder the whole world's weight (Jeurissen 2004); it is distributed socially among companies that pretend to be citizens and take part in the obligation to pursue a social agenda beyond what is required by law. However, the debate remains if CC is advantageous to



their workers' internal citizenship. Many types of research have been conducted to determine the antecedents of CC or OCB. Nevertheless, just a few studies have been conducted on the link between perceived CC and the OCB done by individual workers, much alone on whether perceived CC is always beneficial for increasing their OCBs.

A firm's excellent CC examples will positively affect people's citizenship behavior toward the business. Although most of the research has examined numerous determinants of OCBs from three primary perspectives: individual characteristics, job characteristics, and inter-organizational characteristics, there is a shortage of understanding regarding how OCBs may influence perceived CC positively or negatively.

## Methodology

### Sample and Procedure

This study is based on a survey conducted by administering a questionnaire to business owners in the Santander Province in Colombia. A non-probabilistic convenience sampling was used. The sample was selected using the list of companies associated with the Chamber of Commerce of Bucaramanga. Initially, 200 entrepreneurs were identified and contacted, but only 105 agreed to the interview.

CC theory is the foundation for this study (Carroll 1998). The model supports socially conscious conduct and focuses on how companies relate to stakeholders and the environment by bringing attention to the disparity between business and society. According to the theory, corporations are to be economically responsible and should be able to cover their expenses, obey the law across the board, and adhere to ethical and high moral standards, including avoiding irresponsible behavior such as environmental degradation or selling unsafe products.

To facilitate interviews and follow the health protocol established by the government of Colombia due to the pandemic, telephone interviews were conducted from January to March 2021. Different industries were represented among the participating companies (retail, furniture, restaurants, agro-industrial, service, transportation, etc.). All companies declared an annual income of 25 thousand dollars or above. A five-point Likert scale was used for all items and constructs.

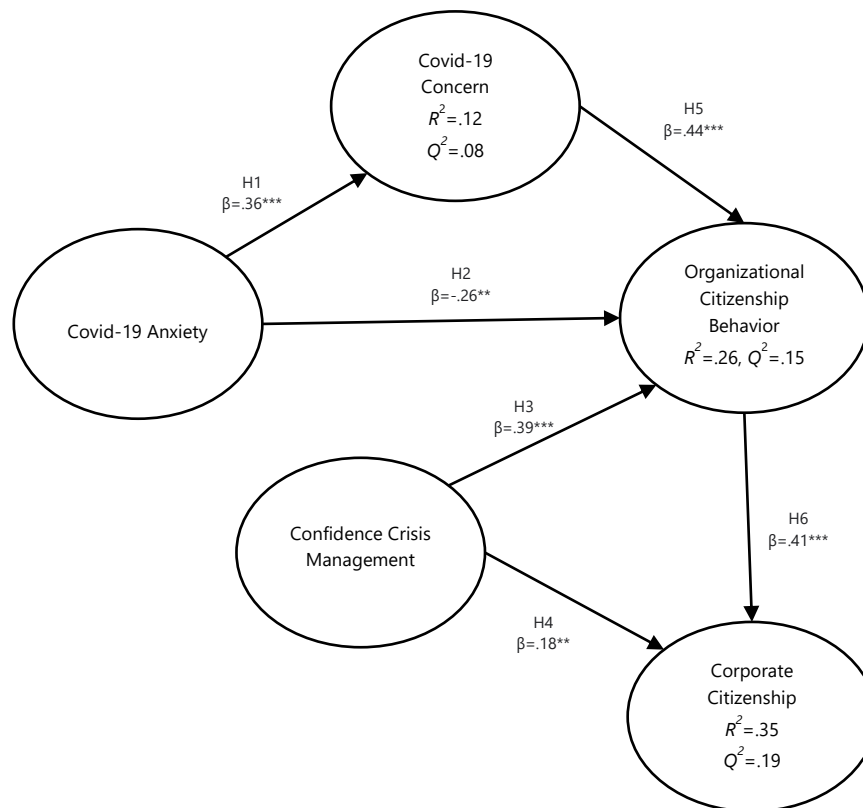
### Measures

The Corona Virus Anxiety Scale (CAS) is a five-item scale with high reliability ( $\alpha=.93$ ) and validity, as shown by a survey of 775 individuals; findings validate the CAS as a viable and valuable instrument (Lee 2020). COC was measured based on Nelson et al. (2020) scale. The authors found that individual differences in mental health symptoms in confirmed cases were significantly positively associated with increased COC. Aiken's V coefficient and 95% confidence intervals (95% CI) were used to quantify the degree of relevance, representativeness, and clarity.  $V \geq .70$  with  $95\% CI \geq .59$  indicates a positive assessment reagent. CCM scale was developed and tested, a nine-item scale with high reliability ( $\alpha=.86$ ) and  $AVE=.91$ .

Company owners' OCB was determined using the Lee & Allen (2002) scale. The scale consists of sixteen items. The scale created by Maignan & Ferrell (2000) was used to gather data on CC. It is an 18-item measure. All scales statements were denoted by a standard five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. SEM was used to carry out the analysis. SEM's multivariate statistical procedures allow checking functional, predictive, and causal hypotheses to test structural models. Consequently, the technique used within SEM for this research is Partial Least Squares (PLS). The model was tested using SmartPLS3 version 3.3.3 software.

## Results

Figure 1 provides summary of the PLS results.



**Figure 1: Summary of PLS Results**

Source: authors

Different authors indicate that the Partial Least Squares (PLS) model results can be evaluated globally (general model) and locally (measurement model and structural model) (Henseler et al. 2016). The model fit test is considered the initial test in the evaluation with PLS (Camacho et al. 2020); then, the measurement and structural model evaluation must be carried out (Albort-Morant et al. 2018). According to Henseler et al. (2016), when using PLS-SEM, the model fit evaluation can be performed through the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) measurement, the Unweighted Squares Discrepancy ( $d_{ULS}$ ) measurement, and the Geodesic Discrepancy ( $d_G$ ) measurement. An SRMR value=0 indicates a perfect fit, and less than .05 is acceptable. Therefore, Henseler et al. (2016) consider a cutoff value of .08 is suitable for PLS route models. Table 1 presents all measurements' results below HI99; therefore, the required condition is met (Albort-Morant et al. 2018).

**Table 1. Global Research Model Evaluation**

	Estimated Model	HI95	HI99
SRMR	.08	.08	.09
$d_{ULS}$	4.56	3.92	4.90
$d_G$	2.61	3.15	3.68

Notes: HI95: bootstrap based on 95% percentiles; HI99 on 99% percentiles with 5000 subsamples.

We examined the internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant to evaluate the reflective measurement model following the steps recommended by the literature (Hair et al. 2017). Cross-factor

loadings analysis (Hair et al. 2014) evaluated each item's reliability. All cross-factorial loads of the variables met the conditions. Construct consistency was evaluated using the composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , which must be greater than .7 (Hair et al. 2014). Table 2 shows that the set of constructs and dimensions satisfy all requirements ( $\alpha > .81$ ,  $CR > .91$ ,  $AVE > .60$ ,  $HTMT < 1$ ). The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) is a discriminant validity, meaning two latent variables that represent different theoretical concepts are statistically different. If the HTMT is smaller than one, discriminant validity can be established.

**Table 2. Measurement Model Indicators Summary**

Variables	Internal consistency		Convergent validity	Discriminant validity
	$\alpha > .7$	$CR > .7$	$AVE > .5$	$HTMT < 1$
COVID-19 Anxiety (CA)	.91	.94	.84	Yes
Confidence Crisis Management (CCM)	.86	.91	.77	Yes
Corporate Citizenship (CC)	.96	.96	.60	Yes
Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)	.94	.95	.65	Yes
COVID-19 Concern (COC)	.82	.92	.85	Yes

### Structural Model Evaluation

We have followed the steps recommended by the literature to evaluate the structural model results (Hair et al. 2017). Table 3 exhibits values of  $Q^2$  obtained using the blindfolding procedure for an omission distance=6. Concerning the values of  $Q^2$ , it is possible to observe that the values are above 0 and have a positive sign. OCB and CC are assessed as medium predictive values and COC as low. These results provide evidence of the predictive relevance of the research model in terms of its endogenous variables. In Table 3, a medium effect in the CC construct with CCM is shown. The size effect was assessed using Cohen's  $f^2$  (Cohen 1988). This measure assesses the change in  $R^2$  when a particular exogenous construct is omitted from the model and if it has a substantive impact on endogenous constructs.

**Table 3. Structural Model Coefficient Path Summary**

Direct effects on endogenous constructs	Coefficients <i>Path</i> ( $\beta$ )	<i>p</i> Values	BCCI of 95%	$f^2$	$q^2$
COVID-19 Concern					
CA $\rightarrow$ COC	.36	.00	[-.20, -.51]	.15	.09
$R^2=.12$					
$Q^2=.08$					
Organizational Citizenship Behavior					
CA $\rightarrow$ OCB	-.26	.01	[-.42, -.07]	.08	.04
COC $\rightarrow$ OCB	.44	.00	[-.26, .61]	.22	.12
CCM $\rightarrow$ OCB	.39	.00	[-.25, .54]	.20	.10
$R^2=.26$					
$Q^2=.15$					
Corporate Citizenship					
OCB $\rightarrow$ CC	.41	.00	[-.23, .55]	.23	.092
CCM $\rightarrow$ CC	.32	.00	[-.16, .48]	.14	.241
$R^2=.35$					
$Q^2=.19$					

Notes: BCCI: bias-corrected confidence intervals based on a one tail distribution Student  $t_{(5000)}$ ,  $t_{(.05, 4999)} = 1.64$ ,  $t_{(.01, 4999)} = 2.33$ ,  $t_{(.001, 4999)} = 3.09$

### Hypothesis Validation

Table 4 shows that the model had moderate and low predictive relevance for five of its endogenous constructs and one negative. H1 and H2 posited that CA would positively affect COC and OCB. The results show a positive effect on COC and a negative impact on OCB; therefore, H1 was supported, and H2 was not supported. H3 and H4 refer to the potential effect of CCM on OCB and CC. The results for H3 and H4 were positive, and both hypotheses were supported. On the other hand, H5 expected that COC would positively affect OCB; the results show a positive direct effect; therefore, H5 was supported. H6 stated a direct effect of OCB on CC; the results show a positive direct effect; therefore, H6 was supported. To complement the results presented in Table 4, Figure 1 depicts the relationships, path coefficients, signs,  $R^2$  value, and  $Q^2$  value.

**Table 4. Hypothesis Testing**

	<i>Path coefficients (<math>\beta</math>)</i>	<i>p Sig.</i>	<i>Hypotheses</i>
CA → COC	.36	.00	H1. Accepted
CA → OCB	-.26	.01	H2. Not Accepted
CCM → OCB	.39	.00	H3. Accepted
CCM → CC	.18	.00	H4. Accepted
COC → OCB	.44	.00	H5. Accepted
OCB → CC	.41	.00	H6. Accepted

### Conclusions

This research aimed to examine the effects of CA and COC on OCB and the impact of OCB on CC. The research also examined the direct effects of CCM on OCB and CC. This study is pioneering work that focuses on exploring how the virus has impacted employees' behavior in their work settings and its effects on corporate citizenship. Based on the findings, CA increases COC, indicating that an increase in workers' anxiety resulting from the virus makes them more concerned and negatively impacts productivity and employees' performance. However, the results show that CA does not directly affect OCB. These results should be significant for managers and decision-makers because when the organization has created a solid relationship with employees, external events would not change employees' engagement with the corporation. In addition, these outcomes align with Keim et al. (2014) that more research is necessary about employees' attitudes toward returning to work, mainly work attitudes and OCB. These results are essential in studying employee psychology and filling the literature gap addressing employees' psychological effects and attitudes during the COVID-19 epidemic. Also, these outcomes are significant in the study of OCB because citizenship refers to being present someplace and conveys both rights and obligations.

According to the hypotheses, the findings are consistent with the idea that COC affects OCB. Managers must know that eliminating COVID-19 psychological impacts among workers is essential. Brooks et al. (2020) have shown that there has been an increase in mental health problems because of the pandemic. Therefore, corporations must understand that citizenship behaviors are derived from covenants with their employees that establish expectations and stimulate behaviors in favor of the well-being of others. When people feel worried about their future in unknown circumstances, they demand protection and solutions to their problems. Such protection should be provided by an authority figure who is seen to be fair and has extraordinary communication skills.

The research showed that effective CCM methods were linked with greater levels of OCB. People's feelings about their work and how it impacts their well-being are the findings that back up the claim that job satisfaction is associated with people's emotions (Gebauer & Lowman 2009). Contemporary companies rely on individuals willing to make discretionary contributions that benefit colleagues, other

employees, and the company. Citizenship actions can benefit companies on many levels while also helping to keep them operating correctly. This study has provided preliminary insights into how the COVID-19 pandemic affects OCB and CC. The current crisis offers businesses a fantastic chance to become more involved in community-based activities and perhaps kickstart a new era of community-based growth.

It is necessary to appreciate the effect of CCM on CC. These findings are coherent with Contreras & Gonzalez's (2021) suggestions that creating a positive atmosphere of cooperation, where people believe they have been treated fairly, is essential for promoting organizational change. These behaviors may shape active engagement and involvement in the local environment, helping others, and respecting their rights. Furthermore, citizenship is founded on the concept of a collaborative relationship between citizens and their community regulated by responsibilities to the collective and by individual self-interest.

The path coefficients' results on the relationship of COC on OCB (.44) and OCB on CC (.41) are remarkable, and both connections are significant and positive. These results confirm what Swaen & Maignan (2003) stated related to the interconnection between OCB and CC. In simple words, OCB oversees employees' behaviors related to ethics, and CC oversees activities that promote good citizenship in society. Indeed, these findings support companies' being more conducive to creating and displaying a good CC position with high OCBs. When workers consider their company ethical, they are consistent with its value system. Corporations that practice social responsibility foster reciprocal relationships between employers and employees, motivating employees to reciprocate with favorable attitudes and behaviors toward the organization.

OCB is related to what organizational members do, whereas CC defines what organizations do in the community in which they operate. Then, CC is frequently the product of the efforts of a few people; therefore, people are also highly essential in its development. The beneficiaries of these two civic activities are very different. Corporate citizens conduct themselves in a way that helps the organization. According to Maignan & Ferrell (2003), the business is always the primary winner in this scenario, with the organizational stakeholders primarily benefiting from CC. CC acts in the best interests of the community.

Findings confirm what Camacho & Salazar-Concha (2020) stated that corporations might use CC as a marketing strategy to distinguish their goods from rivals or improve their financial success. Companies that are good corporate citizens may be rewarded, for example, with increased consumer support. They may also be fostered by a culture that promotes peace and friendliness. Businesses see CC as another duty that they owe to society and place their commitment to the community and their stakeholders in these terms. While OCB and OC may be used for other reasons, such as impression management, they may be used alone.

### **Implications for Management**

The study and its results have significant implications for how businesses should behave themselves. Companies need to project an image of a corporate citizen to society at large and their workers. When employees perceive their organizations to be good corporate citizens, they strive to become good citizens, thereby expending more discretionary effort toward accomplishing organizational goals. The study's results apply to any company interested in influencing employee behavior. To take advantage of this connection, a company must communicate its corporate citizenship activities to its workers. This study offers managers and practitioners important information, especially those in emerging markets and developing countries, on how necessary it is to eliminate the psychological impacts of COVID-19 among workers to improve the OCBs and exhibit a better CC position in front of the company's stakeholders. Finally, creating an environment that stimulates OCB among employees could be beneficial for corporations, more when a non-controllable crisis arises; the outcomes of this study show employees' positive attitudes toward OCB, even in times of COVID-19, and subsequently, due to the effect of OCB on CC, the opportunities of improving the citizen positioning on the society. Therefore, corporate strategies

and programs to improve OCB and CC among employees are essential in order to keep the workforce bonded to corporations' need.

### Constraints and Further Research

The scope of this research is limited to Colombia, a developing nation. One limitation of the study is that the results are based on a small sample of businesses operating in a single Colombian area, which may not be generalizable. As a result, it is essential to research a developed country. A research framework may be designed to investigate the connection between COVID-19, OCB, and CC and evaluate the worldwide economic effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. Another constraint is the limited number of businesses involved in this study. In the future, a broad range of industries should be examined to further our knowledge of these phenomena across sectors and nations.

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## When do consumers perceive supermarket chains as good corporate citizens? Evidence from the Dominican Republic during Covid-19

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The disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have magnified the need to examine how corporate citizenship (CC) influences consumer behavior. This study extends the theory of planned behavior and tests the relative influence of four dimensions of CC on consumer planned intentions to buy (BI) and planned behavior (PB). It also examines whether consumer attitude towards business (CAB) moderates the relationships. Data were obtained from supermarket customers in the Dominican Republic and analyzed with confirmatory factor analysis and multiple regression analysis. The findings support the effect of CC on BI and PB, although the effects vary. BI is significantly influenced by three dimensions of CC, namely economic citizenship, legal citizenship, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. But these effects are weaker when CAB is low. Additionally, the moderating influence of CAB highlights that supermarket consumers are less influenced by CC activities when CAB is low.

**Keywords:** corporate citizenship, corporate social responsibility, theory of planned behavior, COVID-19

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### Introduction

The COVID-19 global pandemic has threatened the value network of many businesses across several different sectors. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected numerous organizations and companies (He & Harris 2020), including education, food, healthcare, tourism, retail, manufacturing, logistics, etc. For example, various studies have examined COVID-19's effect on the retail industry (Dominici et al. 2021, Wittwer & Anderson 2021). In addition, the pandemic has changed how businesses emphasize their position in society and how they seek their economic, social, and environmental goals. Now, companies should implement Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies to demonstrate their commitment to society and vulnerable groups, particularly those closest to them, i.e., the local environment connected with the place of origin or territories where they have a more significant presence.

Nicola et al. (2020) suggest that the food sector and the healthcare industry are probably the most impacted by the pandemic. But, despite the devastation of the pandemic, supermarkets continue to provide services to satisfy essential needs. There is also more spending on food across all supermarket stores. Likewise, online merchants have seen a remarkable rise in customer spending on groceries. The Dominican Republic retail industry has also experienced significant changes during the past three decades. This transition occurred due to continued economic development, as shown by changing retail forms, shop sizes, and product and service diversity. As a result, retail, particularly supermarket chains, expanded their operations and services (USDA 2018). The number of supermarket operators in the Dominican Republic has increased by 100 percent in the past twenty years. Supermarkets chains are in Santo Domingo and other major cities. More than 120 supermarkets in the Dominican Republic belong to supermarket chains (USDA 2018).

This study contributes to the extant body of literature because it is a pioneering study that evaluates the influences of CC on the theory of planned behavior (TPB) in times of a pandemic, with consumer attitude toward business (ATB) acting as a moderator. ATB refers to how a person has either a positive or a negative assessment/appraisal of business conduct to be performed upon (Taylor & Todd 1995). This research investigates what supermarket consumers in the Dominican Republic think about the CC of supermarket chains during a pandemic and how those practices and strategies influence their planned behavior (PB).

## Literature Review

### The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

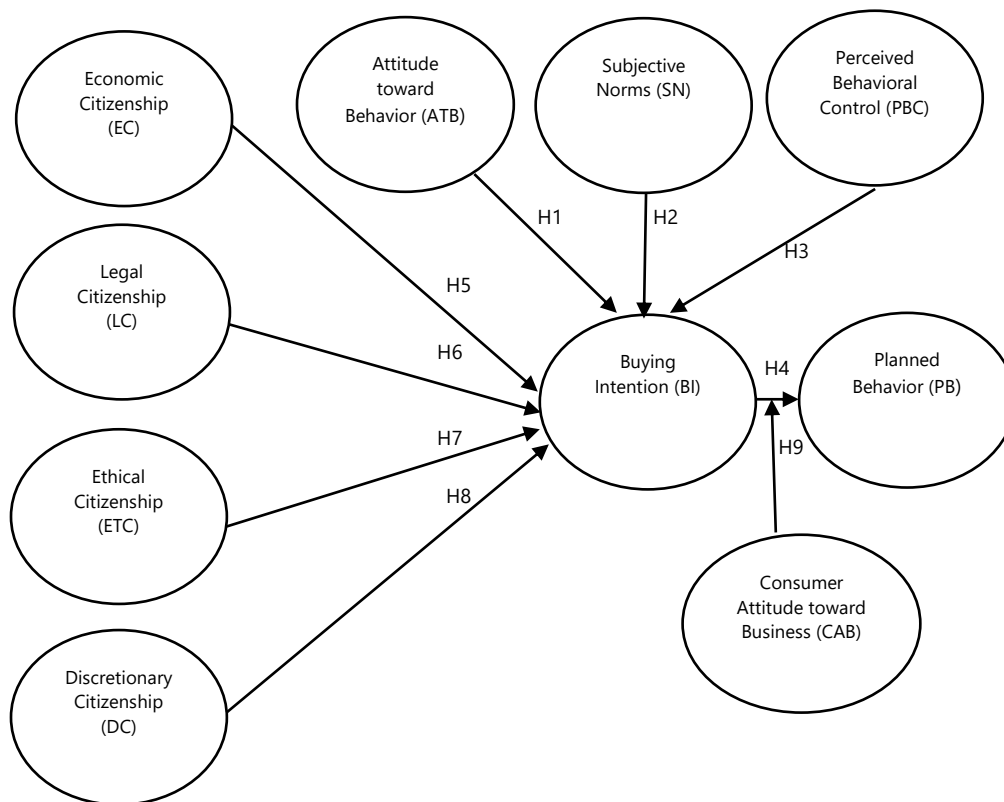
The TPB advanced by Ajzen (1985) and Ajzen (2011) serves as an essential foundation for this research. TPB models human behavior and has been extensively employed in various disciplines, including health, marketing, international business, education, etc. The primary tenet of the TPB is that an individual's conduct is governed by a purpose, which comprises three constructs: (1) attitude toward behavior (ATB), (2) subjective norm (SN), and (3) perceived behavioral control (PBC).

In general terms, ATB is an evaluation or response to engaging in a specific activity, such as being pleased or sad, favorable or unfavorable. It may also be defined as either worthless or helpful. Individuals' intentions to engage in a specific activity are strengthened by their favorable attitudes about that behavior (Beck & Ajzen 1991). SN refers to social pressure to do or abstain from acting (Ajzen 1985) and denotes an impression of the expectations of significant others. PBC is related to perceived self-efficacy, which is concerned with the judgment of how well one can execute required actions to deal with specific situations (Fishbein & Ajzen 2009). These three elements contribute to developing a behavioral intention, which measures an individual's desire to engage in a particular action.

Despite the extensive use of the TPB, some researchers have criticized its predictive efficacy, primarily because of a small set of variables to explain behavior in determining circumstances (Tommasetti et al. 2018). In that tenor, some scholars have made changes to the original TPB model by adding more variables such as *perceived ease of use*, *personal moral norm*, *refusal skill*, *perceived moral obligation*, *past behavior*, *perceived usefulness*, etc. This research added to the TPB model the CC's variables of economic citizenship (EC), legal citizenship (LC), ethical citizenship (ETC), discretionary citizenship (DC), and attitude towards business (CAB).

This research is related to aspects of supermarket chains' CC policies and customers' perceptions about the performance of these entities fulfilling them during the COVID-19 pandemic. Scholars agree that it is not enough to assess supermarket's performance solely based on economic and financial statements; it is necessary to consider their contributions to social and environmental sustainability as a strategic element to improve customers' perceptions through different actions and strategies which can affect society and the environment (Emese 2018).

Additionally, Dennis et al. (2009) pose that the concept of corporate giving or philanthropy has been the subject of many debates. Friedman (2002) considers social responsibility activities as demands on resources that affect investors' interests. In other words, managers will consider altruistic actions acceptable if they positively impact financial statements. On the other hand, Dönmez-Maç et al. (2019) believe that companies must assume corporate philanthropy based on moral and ethical terms above economic interests because companies are members of society and have a duty to use their resources for the betterment of the common good of society at large. Although CSR and its implications have been widely studied, the same has not happened with the decision-making processes related to behaviors motivated by philanthropy. Sánchez (2000) indicates that behaviors motivated by philanthropy are intended to enhance the firm's financial performance or used as a political response to pressures exerted by environmental actors. Conversely, Dönmez-Maç et al. (2019) point out that corporate altruism is exhibited when corporations assign part of their resources to promote the overall welfare of society, no matter if the actions improve profits or enhance corporate images. But CC is unlikely to be entirely explained by strategic and altruistic factors and may include other factors such as the extent of a CEO's behavioral control, the degree to which they consider corporate philanthropy a component of their self-identity, and firms' availability of resources.



**Figure 1. Research Model Showing the Effect of TPB and CC on BI and the Moderating Role of CAB on the BI-PB Relationship**

*Source: the authors*

Fishbein & Ajzen (2009) determined that certain decision-making contexts require moral considerations, while Conner & Armitage (1998) identified self-identity as a component of TPB. Similarly, Dennis et al. (2009) argued that individuals are more inclined to engage in a specific behavior if this is considered an

essential component of their self-identity. Consequently, it is necessary to evaluate customers' perceptions about CC (strategic or altruist), considering the different TPB components: ATB, SN, and PBC.

Figure 1 details the research constructs and hypothesized relationships on the elements of the TPB and the CC on the BI. It also shows the moderating effect of the CAB on the relationship between BI and PB.

### **Attitude toward Behavior (ATB)**

Attitude relates to an individual's judgment of the desired conduct (positive or negative) and refers to a subjective assessment of behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen 2009). Additionally, it may be defined as the subjective assessment of conduct (Farah & Newman 2010). In other words, it involves thinking about the consequences of carrying out a behavior. Within the TPB, an individual's attitude toward a particular activity is determined by behavioral beliefs and result assessment. Further, the attitude construct serves as an immediate antecedent that predicts an individual's desire to participate in determined actions (Ajzen 2011). In consumer psychology research, attitude has traditionally been a critical factor in determining behavioral intention and actual action. In retail, attitudes about CC have long been a crucial component in accurately forecasting pre-environmental market intention and demand. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H1. ATB is positively related to BI.*

### **Subjective Norms (SN)**

Fishbein & Ajzen (2009) define SN as a belief regarding whether most people approve or reject certain conduct. Zhang et al. (2019) stated that SN relates to the social stress experienced by individuals in the immediate environment and those vital to a customer's life. Additionally, it reflects how much someone feels ethically responsible for others by purchasing sustainable products (Barber et al. 2014). SN are views about whether other significant individuals, such as family and friends, accept or disapprove of one's actions. SN are established by an individual's normative standards and is an incentive to adhere to certain behaviors. When a person intends to participate in a specific activity, SN serves as a direct antecedent (Beck & Ajzen 1991). Scalco et al. (2017) discovered that SN has more relevance and favorable impacts on purchasing intentions using TPB. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H2. SN is positively related to BI.*

### **Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)**

Beck & Ajzen (1991) defined PBC as an individual's assessment of the amount of difficulty in doing an activity of interest. According to Al-Swidi et al. (2014), this is a person's decision on whether they can engage in certain conduct. Specifically, people's knowledge of available resources, such as buying products from supermarket chains, could be more expensive in times of a pandemic. Perceptions of how difficult or easy a purchase will influence consumers' actual behavior. Bandura (2012) determined that perceived self-efficacy is comparable to PBC and amplifies the concept, stating that PBC is subject to change based on the situation and consumers' opinions of their behavioral control and time level. For example, cultural and environmental factors could influence consumers from different countries. The literature suggests that PBC, together with the other two TPB components, ATB and SN, is a significant latent variable determining the retailer's selection (Al-Swidi et al. 2014). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H3. PBC is positive related to BI.*

### **Buying Intention (BI)**

Fazio & Zanna (1981) indicated that attitude is the memory connection between a particular item and a quick judgment. Thus, attitude may provide insight into customers' psychological evaluations of items (Chen et al. 2020). Mostafa (2006) discovered a positive association between attitude and BI across various cultures. Consumer satisfaction has been an area of significant development amongst academia during the pandemic. Rukuni & Maziriri (2020) indicated that several studies have focused on this topic. The authors examined the impact of COVID-19 readiness strategies on customer satisfaction and the consequences for consumer behavioral intentions. The COVID-19 effect on society and consumers altered consumers' product needs, shopping, purchasing behavior, and post-purchase satisfaction levels (Mason et al. 2020). On the other hand, Monmousseau et al. (2020), in their research focusing on customer satisfaction, provided an overview of retail practices during the pandemic and derived an action plan for maintaining satisfaction, trust, and loyalty during COVID-19. Findings show that keeping in touch with customers over digital channels generates an attitude that significantly affects accepting certain behavioral choices (Zhou et al. 2013). Prior studies have also focused on the association between attitude and deliberate conduct. For example, Peña-García et al. (2020) found that environmental sentiments have a role in customers' propensity to buy. Attitude is one of the essential elements in determining whether customers are willing to buy from supermarkets, according to Foabeh & Achaleke (2020). So our next hypothesis is:

*H4. BI is positive related to PB.*

### **Corporate Citizenship (CC)**

Corporate Citizen refers to the set of socioeconomic activities frequently taken by companies to fulfill perceived social responsibilities (Carroll 1998). Crane & Matten (2005) iterate that CC is concerned with the well-being of people and the environment, which results in the development of value for the company and define CC as corporate contributions and other acts of generosity in the local community. Similarly, Maignan et al. (1999) described CC as how businesses meet the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary responsibilities imposed on them by their stakeholders.

The adoption of CC may result in the capacity to attain corporate financial success (Camacho & Salazar-Concha 2020). But, on the other hand, its implementation contributes to increased customer purchase intention (Lee & Yoon 2018), employee job satisfaction, work engagement, organizational citizenship, and company success (Lin et al. 2012). CC encompasses a range of activities, including funding staff education, promoting ethical programs, adopting environmentally responsible practices, and the sponsorship of community events (Maignan & Ferrell 2000).

Corporations ought to be more aware of how they appear to society as having adopted corporate citizenship initiatives to show that they operate in a socially responsible way (Carrigan et al. 2017). The advantages of civic engagement, nevertheless, are somewhat conflicting. While some research show businesses/retailers induce a favorable behavioral reaction in consumers others contend that consumer responses are not as straightforward (Luo & Bhattacharya 2006). Given these inconsistencies, further research is required into how customers react ethically to companies claiming to be corporate citizens, especially when society faces a crisis or pandemic (Marquina Feldman & Vasquez-Parraga 2013).

### **Economic Citizenship (EC)**

The EC dimension requires that all businesses manufacture, market, and supply high-quality items profitably. In a larger sense, businesses must be successful and provide essential commodities and services to society (Carroll 1998). Corporate citizens who behave ethically generate enough money to ensure that their investors enjoy a healthy return on their investment. Other stakeholders are guaranteed the business's continuation via the flow of goods, services, employment, and other advantages supplied

by the firm. Profitable firms can meet the needs and desires of their shareholders, which makes economic trade attractive from a social standpoint (Camacho & Salazar-Concha 2020).

*H5. EC has a positive effect on BI.*

### **Legal Citizenship (LC)**

This CC dimension refers to the organizational obligation to obey the law (Carroll 1998). As with ordinary citizens, good corporate citizens must consider the law. The law may be seen as codified ethics (Camacho & Salazar-Concha 2020). If business ethics is about doing what is right, legislators set minimal requirements for how these principles should be exhibited in corporate success. These rules are relevant to firms seeking to be good corporate citizens since they govern their interactions with major stakeholders such as customers, workers, and the natural environment (Maignan et al. 1999).

*H6. LC has a positive effect on BI.*

### **Ethical Citizenship (EC)**

In this dimension of CC, the aim is the organizational obligation to conduct moral business activities. Compliance with the law requires working at the bare minimum level of permitted behavior (Maignan & Ferrell 2000). The law is frequently stated to be the foundation of good conduct. To be a good corporate citizen, a company must do more than follow the law. Rules and regulations usually represent the bare minimums to which legislators can agree in political maneuvering (Lee & Carroll 2011). Nowadays, many individuals raise concerns about society's morals (Carroll 1998). They apply not just to business but also to other areas of society, government, education, healthcare, etc. Companies that aspire to be recognized as exemplary corporate citizens must demonstrate economic success, compliance with the law, and a commitment to operating ethically.

*H7. EC has a positive effect on BI.*

### **Discretionary Citizenship (DC)**

Maignan & Ferrell (2003) define discretionary citizenship as transparent business practices based on moral ideals that assist the organization in achieving community recognition and accomplishment. This dimension focus on the organizational duty to engage in a non-statutory activity. Philanthropy is widely thought to benefit humanity via charitable activities, regardless of whether individual persons, foundations, or companies are involved (Maignan et al. 1999). Philanthropy, which is commonly exhibited via corporate donations, is frequently equated with Corporate Citizenship by many in the business sector (Carroll 1998). These days, there are various methods by which companies are giving back to the communities in which they operate, benefiting all stakeholders. Although economic methods are not the only ones, corporations can support social activities, education, and environmental protection can be considered part of these practices.

*H8. DC has a positive effect on BI.*

### **Attitude toward Business (CAB)**

Attitude is a significant predictor of behavioral adoption intention (Fishbein 1980). It comprises an individual's central beliefs about the perceived consequences of engaging in a particular behavior (Al-Debei et al. 2013). According to the TPB, an individual's inner views about the results of a specific action affect attitudes toward the actual conduct (Ajzen 1985). Individuals' beliefs vary depending on their own experiences, personality traits, and mentalities (Al-Lozi 2011).

Behavior is based on an attitude. According to original research performed by Vitell et al. (2005), individual attitudes are essential to understanding consumer ethical decision-making. The authors showed that consumer attitude toward business is a significant predictor of the passive component of ethical problems. The authors concluded that individuals' opinions about business connect to their views about dealing with morally ambiguous customer problems. Consumers with a more unfavorable attitude toward business were less likely to consider certain dubious activities to be unethical. Studies on the effect of corporate attitudes on consumer ethics have generated inconsistent findings, which highlights the need for further research (Patwardhan et al. 2012).

*H9. CAB moderates the relationship between BI and PB.*

## Methodology

### Sample and Procedure

Following COVID-19-related limitations imposed by the government of the Dominican Republic, a survey was undertaken, and questionnaires were sent to students at one of the country's most prestigious institutions of higher learning. Student samples are widely used in consumer behavior research given the cost and access benefits (Yim et al. 2014). For this study, university students qualify as an appropriate sample for hypothesis testing given the high degree of within-group homogeneity (Peterson 2001). Survey Monkey was selected because it enables participants to complete the instrument using various technological devices and facilitates data collection. Translations were made from English to Spanish and then back to English by researchers proficient in both languages. The differences and similarities between the two forms of the English language were explored to ensure validity of the translation process. Only 206 of the 396 questionnaires received were included in the data analysis, resulting in a response rate of 52%.

### Measures and Sample Characteristics

The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section measured the three components of TPB (ATB, SN and PBC) on a 7-point Likert scale (Ajzen 2002). The second section of the questionnaire was based on CC using an 18-item measure created by Maignan and Ferrell (2000). This scale offers a measure of each of the four Perceived Corporate Citizenship categories at the organizational level and a composite score. The third component measured ATB is the Richins (1983) scale. The final section collected demographic information.

The sample represented both gender groups, with males accounting for 52.7% and females 47.3%. Similarly, the different age groups were well-represented, with the most significant category ranging between 25-34 years old. Most participants have a postgraduate degree (47%) and visit a supermarket every week (45%).

## Analyses and Results

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Following the guidelines provided by Hair et al. (2010), confirmatory factor analysis facilitated the construction of factor scores for hypothesis testing. The analysis followed the procedures specified by Rambocas & Mahabir (2021). All indicators satisfied the retention criteria in EC, LC, ETC, and DC. For ATB, one item was deleted because of low factor loadings. Similarly, one item was deleted from BI, PB, and CAB scales. The analysis on SN revealed a two-factor solution with acceptable variance explained and reliability coefficients. Our subsequent analysis retained the two-factor solution and expanded the details of our model. The results are presented in Table 1.



**Table 1. Results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

Variable	# of Items	Factor Loadings	% of Variance explained	Composite Reliability
Economic Citizenship (EC)	4	.69 .83 .81 .77	60.87	.86
Legal Citizenship (LC)	4	.79 .83 .83 .82	66.68	.89
Ethical Citizenship (ETC)	5	.82 .75 .83 .72 .68	58.01	.87
Discretionary Citizenship (DC)	5	.77 .80 .84 .77 .84	65.03	.90
Attitude Toward Behavior (ATB)	3	.68 .84 .80	60.57	.82
Subjective Norms – First Factor (SN1 and SN 4)	2	.81 .81	65.80	.79
Subjective Norms – Second Factor (SN2 and SN3)	2	.81 .81	65.59	.79
Buying Intentions (BI)	2	.94 .94	88.55	.94
Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)	3	.84 .89 .87	75.41	.90
Planned Behavior (PB)	2	.88 .88	77.95	.88
Consumer Attitude Towards Business (CAB)	2	.81 .81	64.87	.79

**Hypotheses Testing: Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA), and Moderated Analysis**

MRA was used to test the expected relationships among the theoretical constructs. The analytical models are specified in variates 1 to 3.

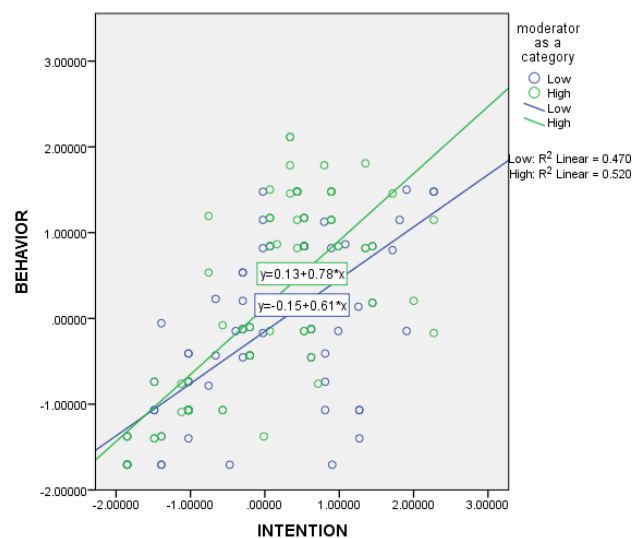
$$Y_{BI} = b_0 + b_1X_{EC} + b_2X_{LC} + b_3X_{ETC} + b_4X_{DC} + b_5X_{ATB} + b_6X_{SN\_1} + b_7X_{SN\_2} + b_8X_{PBC} \quad [\text{Model 1}]$$

$$Y_{PB} = b_0 + b_1X_{BI} + b_2X_{CAB} \quad [\text{Model 2}]$$

$$Y_{PB} = b_0 + b_1X_{BI} + b_2X_{CAB} + b_3X_{BI}X_{CAB} \quad [\text{Model 3}]$$

**Table 2. Results of Multiple Regression Analysis**

	Standardized $\beta$	$p$	$R^2$	$df$	$F$	$p$
<b>Model 1</b>						
Economic citizenship (EC)	.03	.68	.27	(8, 197)	9.10	.00
Legal citizenship (LC)	-.21	.03				
Ethical citizenship (ETC)	.21	.03				
Discretionary citizenship (DC)	-.13	.13				
Attitude toward behavior (ATB)	-.12	.12				
Subjective norms1 (SN_1)	-.07	.38				
Subjective norms2 (SN_2)	.25	.00				
Perceived behavior control (PBC)	-.29	.00				
<b>Model 2</b>						
Intention (BI)	.73	.00	.54	(2, 203)	118.82	.00
Attitude toward business (CAB)	.22	.00				
<b>Model 3</b>						
Intention (BI)	.75	.00	.57	(1, 202)	88.09	.00
Attitude toward business (CAB)	.22	.00				
Moderator (Intention*Attitude toward business) (BI*CAB)	.17	.00				

**Figure 2. Moderating Effects of CAB**

The moderator analysis also shows that the relationship between BI and PB is stronger for higher levels of CAB. A comparison is shown in Figure 2. Overall, the results support the influence of CC on the TPB. Relatively to predicting BI, Model 1 explains 27% of the variance ( $R^2=.27$ ;  $F(8, 197)=9.10$ ,  $p=.00$ ). Surprisingly, only four of the independent variables exhibit significant influence which include LC ( $\beta=-.21$ ,  $p=.03$ ), EC ( $\beta=.21$ ,  $p=.03$ ), SM\_2 ( $\beta=.25$ ,  $p=.00$ ), and PBC ( $\beta=-.29$ ,  $p=.00$ ). PBC has the strongest influence

on BI, followed by SM2, EC, and LC. Model 2 also meritoriously predict PB accounting for 53.9% of the overall variance ( $R^2=.54$ ;  $F(2, 203)=188.82$ ,  $p=.00$ ). The results show that both BI ( $\beta=.73$ ,  $p=.00$ ) and ETC ( $\beta=.22$ ,  $p=.00$ ) significantly explain PB. The moderating effect of CAB is detailed in variate 3. The results from the regression analysis support the significant moderating effect of CAB on the relationship between BI and PB ( $\Delta R^2=.03$ ,  $\Delta F(1, 202)=12.82$ ,  $p=.00$ ; and the percentage of variance increased to 56.7%. The results are presented in Table 2.

### Discussion and Implications

The economic and social uncertainties from the COVID-19 pandemic have magnified the need for organizations to manage their CC activities effectively. This study examined how CC practice by supermarket chains in the Dominican Republic affects consumer planned behavior. The study's findings significantly link consumers' purchase intentions and behavior to two aspects of CC: the economic and legal, and two dimensions of the TPB: SN and PBC. Further, the study extended the TPB and showed that CAB moderates the relationship between consumers' intention and behavior. More specifically, the association is more robust when CAB is favorable. The statistically significant relationships of EC and LC suggest that consumers' purchase intentions and behavior are enhanced when supermarkets meet their economic and legal responsibilities. Consequently, to develop better performance and manage the uncertainties of the pandemic, supermarkets must be able to demonstrate a more profound commitment to customer service and contractual obligations to all stakeholders, including customers and employees. The study also shows that consumers' planned purchase intentions and behaviors are influenced by how supermarkets are perceived as responsible in their corporate behavior. From the arguments made in the TPB, these perceptions are usually based on subjective norms that arise from interpersonal relationships and social encounters. The findings also support PBC in consumer purchase intentions and behavior and demonstrate supermarkets' importance in facilitating easy access to information about their CC initiatives. The results show that the more consumers are aware of the CSR initiatives of supermarkets, the higher is their planned purchase behavior. This suggests that CSR initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic should be treated as of paramount importance, and they share information about the supermarket's initiatives.

The study also supports the moderating effects of CAB on consumers' planned behavior. More specifically, consumers' sentiments towards businesses significantly changed consumer responses towards supermarkets. This finding supports our previous expectations that consumers with more favorable attitudes towards firms are more likely to respond positively to supermarkets' CC initiatives and reinforce the existing literature (Patwardhan et al. 2012).

### Conclusions and Limitations

This study contributes to the field of CC, both in academia and practice, particularly in retail supermarket shopping behavior. From an academic and theoretical perspective, this study responds to essential calls that encourage researching the potential drivers of consumers' attitudes toward CC and TPB and the importance of creating a positive attitude toward enterprises to be favored by consumers. Although this research is regarded as pioneering because two constructs were evaluated, CC and TPB, in times of a pandemic, the empirical results are consistent with previous research findings and close the gaps identified in this research. This is thought to have contributed to enhancing and extending the understanding of the importance of creating a CC that can positively influence the TPB and improve the acceptance of supermarkets amongst consumers. This paper attempts to examine an integrated model of consumers' attitudes toward supermarket chains in the Dominican Republic from a practical perspective. Therefore, policymakers, managers, and other practitioners can benefit from the findings of this study in designing their CC strategies and programs to achieve long-term objectives. This study contributes to the

existing body of knowledge from a theoretical perspective by developing and testing a conceptual model that evaluates how much CC influences TPB when a health and economic crisis affects consumers. This model introduced several constructs and, at the same time, justified relationships among relevant constructs. The study also provides further validation for many structural relationships between constructs in a developing country context, the Dominican Republic.

Despite the significance of this study, as it is one of only a few to date that has examined the relationship between CC and TPB in times of a pandemic, this study has some limitations that can be addressed by future research. The first and most significant limitation is the sample; future studies should increase the number of participants and compare different market segments and/or countries to evaluate the implications and results based on cultural context, types of political systems, religion, and developing, emerging, and developed markets. Future researchers can expand on this study by comparing the results to other business sectors and countries.

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## Exploring how social media marketing influences small business performance amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in Trinidad and Tobago

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The survival of small businesses (SB) is threatened by the economic disruptions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. This study explores the digital responses of SBs in Trinidad and Tobago. More specifically, the study explores how SBs have integrated social media marketing (SMM) into their business operations and owners' perceptions of its impact on performance. Data were collected from 22 owners via semi-structured synchronous interviews. The findings reveal a series of internal and situational influences that either motivated or hindered SMM use during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results further demonstrate the crippling constraints most SBs face when implementing and evaluating the usefulness of SMM on overall business performance. The results also explain why SBs in developing countries respond differently to SMM than developed countries. The study's insights contribute to SMM knowledge and expose the unique challenges SBs in Trinidad and Tobago face when using SMM during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, e-marketing, small business, social media marketing

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### Introduction

The unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are threatening to eliminate the progress made by the Caribbean in human development. It may be the worst test the region has faced since the 2008 financial crisis (Bárcena 2020). Despite the Caribbean's proven resilience, Governments' response to this crisis continues to be significantly undermined by the region's economic and environmental vulnerabilities arising from its smaller size and geographical remoteness. These challenges are compounded by the high level of debt, debt financing, and limited access to international support.

Many Caribbean islands are classified as high to middle-income countries. Further, like other emerging nations, the Caribbean region has vulnerable healthcare systems, inadequate infrastructure, and limited absolute resources to tackle the challenges of any national health emergency. The substantial reduction of revenues from international tourism (the dominant revenue stream for many countries), and high governmental restrictions implemented to curb the spread of the pandemic, have resulted in dire short-



term economic and social consequences for the people of the region. However, experts have warned that these measures will have lasting effects on the region's human capital, productivity, and behavior (OECD 2021). Notably, according to scholars, the COVID-19 pandemic is a different type of crisis (Clapp & Mosley 2020).

The abruptness and global spread make it one of the most defining crises in recent times. The supply chain disruptions, lockdown measures, and global recession have resulted in massive job losses and have a severe knock-on effect on all types of businesses worldwide. In terms of the Caribbean, small businesses (SB) are the backbone to the region's economies, given their significant contributions to the region's social and economic development. In Trinidad and Tobago, they represent over 60 percent of the businesses registered and employ over 30 percent of the country's labor force (Rambocas & Haynes-Burke 2021). They also account for 70 to 85 percent of business activity in Trinidad and Tobago (MOF 2020). But, the contribution of the sector is being threatened by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Like their counter parts in developed countries, SBs are disproportionately affected by shocks arising from the COVID-19 pandemic (UNCTAD 2021).

The financial fragility and massive disruptions in business operations have threatened the sustainability and recovery of many SBs. For example, the economic slowdown caused by the numerous governmental restrictions and ongoing lockdowns has temporarily forced many SBs to withdraw from the market or close business operations entirely. According to a report published by the International Labor Organization (ILO 2021), the Caribbean is among the worst affected regions of the world and experienced one of the sharpest economic contractions by seven percent. The vulnerabilities of smaller enterprises and their limited cash buffers have made these businesses less resilient to the crisis (OECD 2021). Like their Caribbean associates, SBs in Trinidad and Tobago are financially fragile and possess minimal reserves.

The mandatory lockdown measures mean severe reduction in customer demand and major supply chain disruptions. According to recent estimates, approximately 50 percent of small businesses only have enough of a cash buffer for two weeks or less (Bartik et al. 2020, Zickuhr 2020). In this regard, many SBs are running out of money and are at increased risk of permanently closing their doors. Fraccastoro et al. (2021) argued that social media could be a beneficial tool to engage customers and increase sales revenue. This tool provides low cost and practical alternatives to diversify sales and marketing efforts. The benefits are magnified considering the rise in social media usage during the pandemic.

Given this reality, researchers are encouraging SB owners to keep abreast of the changing market conditions and adopt social media marketing (SMM) to support their businesses (Liguori & Pittz 2020). However, in actuality, SMM is a vastly underutilized channel, particularly in developing countries where most SB owners experience high levels of discomfort and uncertainty with digital marketing technology (Abou-Shouk et al. 2013). Nevertheless, despite the distrust and relatively low adoption, social media profoundly affects how businesses reach and engage customers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This exponential increase has led many experts to believe that the technology will become a mainstay in the post-pandemic period. The hastened acceptance, coupled with the disruptions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, make this context worthy of examination.

This study provides added value to the existing academic discourse by investigating three research questions: (1) how has COVID-19 affected SBs in Trinidad and Tobago; (2) how have SBs utilized SMM during the COVID-19 pandemic; and, (3) what are the perceived effects of SMM on SB performance during the COVID-19 pandemic? This study contributes to the limited research on SBs and their corresponding response to the COVID-19 crisis. It also highlights the unique challenges businesses face in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean in general.

## Literature Review

### Social Media Marketing (SMM): A Theoretical Overview

The revolution of social media in the early 2000s has reduced spending in traditional forms of marketing communications and invigorated the shift to online alternatives (Venciūtė 2018). SMM is defined as an interdisciplinary and cross-functional marketing concept that relies on social media (often combined with other communications channels) to create value for stakeholders (Felix et al. 2017). SMM continues to gain popularity due to its relevance to firms of all sizes. It allows companies to interact with customers in a direct, timely, cost-effective, and efficient manner compared to traditional forms of marketing (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard 2013). It can also improve customer engagement, relationships, transmit information, and enhance market reach (Chatterjee & Kar 2020, Huh 2018, Venciūtė 2018). But, while SMM is being embraced by various organizations and researchers worldwide, many SBs have great difficulties integrating these new tools into their marketing strategy (He et al. 2017, Schaupp & Bélanger 2014). The literature discloses several reasons for the slow adoption of SMM and points to limited organizational capability and scarce resources as significant contributors (Kacker & Perrigot 2016). Relying on the resource-based theory (RBV), these authors argued that the effective use of social media channels requires valuable resources, skills, competencies, and financial commitment. The RBV promotes an inside-out perspective on firm-related strategy by examining a firm's internal capabilities and resources to determine the level of competitive advantage (Madhani 2009). Therefore, to fully capitalize on the potential of SMM, companies should match their strategy with the amount of financial, human, and physical resources available. The harsh realities of the COVID-19 pandemic have forced many businesses to rethink their strategy and allocate resources to survive the current business environment. In the context of SBs, the SMM efforts are usually described as inadequate or poorly executed (Taneja & Toombs 2014).

Although SMM is less costly than traditional marketing, it requires extended time, effort, and skills (Oji et al. 2017). Authors also call for a strategic reform of attitudes and behaviors of entrepreneurs to effectively adapt to the changing trends of the marketplace (Cole et al. 2017). Large companies generally have more financial resources to employ web designers, marketers, and other personnel to effectively use social media, whereas SBs usually have limited financial resources and human resources (Taneja & Toombs 2014). According to Tafesse & Wien (2018), the core dimensions of effective SMM implementation include a social media strategy, an active presence, customer engagement, and social media analytics. The authors assert that an effective social media strategy ensures that social media usage is aligned with the strategic marketing objectives. It involves establishing clear objectives and expectations, reinforcing organization-wide commitment, efficiently allocating resources to support the marketing goals, and adhering to clear policies and procedures that guide decisions, content, and customer interactions (Pentina & Koh 2012).

The second dimension of effective SMM implementation involves establishing an active presence on multiple social media platforms. Maintaining an active social media presence involves continuously updating content, testing innovative promotional ideas, and interacting with customers regularly (Tafesse & Wien 2018). Through an active presence, firms can guide customer conversation in their favor, expand customer reach, increase brand exposure, deter competitors' impact on customers, and quickly respond to competitive threats. The third dimension of an effective social media strategy involves using engagement tactics to motivate customers to participate actively and react to a firm's online presence. Researchers suggest that engagement is usually high when a businesses present fascinating, original, and transformational content to potential clients. Direct and timely responses and incentives such as rewards, discounts, and competitions can also positively influence engagement and brand reputation (Li et al. 2021). The final dimension of social media analytics refers to collecting and assessing customer data to make evidence-based marketing decisions. Businesses can use the data to understand consumer

sentiments and overall market trends. Standard metrics used in SMM include consumer reach, levels of engagement, and web traffic. Other measures include tracking the magnitude and quality of customer responses and the number of brand mentions. Companies also monitor consumers' general feelings and opinions by surveying the volume and valence of consumer-generated content on social media and the conversion rates and return on investment (Rambocas & Pacheco 2018).

The literature affirms that effective SMM is hinged on a holistic and integrated approach to marketing and may involve different customer-oriented initiatives including product/service, marketing and e-marketing, web 1.0 website, and web 2.0 social media (Constantinides 2014, Durkin et al. 2013). The product/service initiative involves offering a high-quality product/service using a customer or market-oriented approach and focuses on the value customers receive from the product or service they consume. Marketers must ensure that the value derived from consumption matches the consumers' expectations. Social media has fostered more sophisticated customers and equipped them to conduct extensive research on a product before purchasing. Therefore, if customers encounter consistent negative reviews on the quality of a product or service online, this can discourage future purchases and defeats the purpose of engaging in SMM. As such, firms must be proactive by defining the primary objectives, unique differentiation and positioning strategy, and selling propositions. Additionally, firms should focus on continuous improvements and innovation of products, processes, and marketing systems (McCann & Barlow 2015).

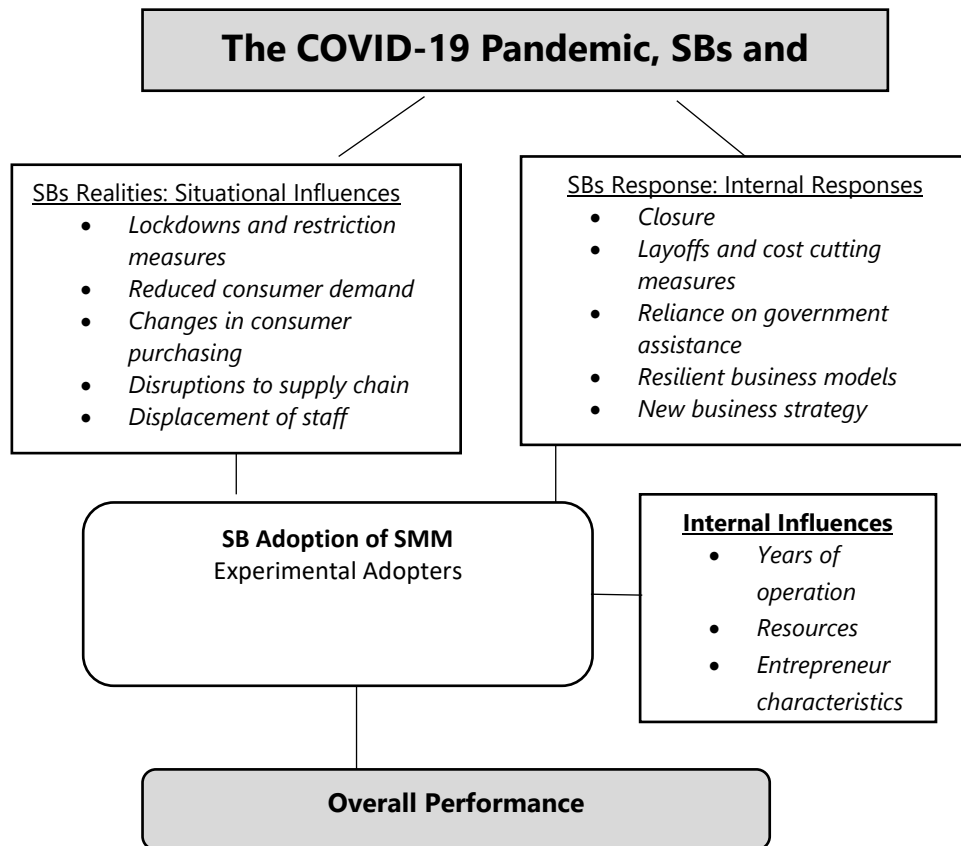
The second initiative involves maintaining a market-oriented perspective that supports traditional and online marketing activities (Constantinides 2014). Various business processes such as production, customer service, and sales must adapt to the online platform and provide value to customers simultaneously. Although it may be difficult for many small businesses due to their limited resources and capabilities, it is achievable and necessary for survival. Following the formulation of a market-oriented organization, companies must establish a credible web presence. Customers must navigate a firm's website or business page quickly and effectively satisfy their needs or wants through this platform. The literature highlights that website design and performance influence consumer responses, including acquisition and loyalty (Candi et al. 2017). Therefore, companies must ensure that their customers can have an easy and enjoyable online experience with their business page or website.

Finally, a successful online presence sets the tone for SMM implementation, i.e., utilizing social media to achieve marketing objectives. Businesses must assess their internal resources and capabilities to perform their desired social media strategy. A company may choose to implement a passive or active social media strategy or combine both approaches to achieve its goals. The passive process involves surveying the online sentiments and expressions, as an invaluable source of unsolicited information. On the other hand, the active approach consists of aggressively engaging social media as a mechanism for sales and communication. It would involve different tactics and strategies to acquire new customers and retain existing ones (Nakara et al. 2012).

### **The Relationship between SMM Implementation and Business Performance**

Many researchers have made the broad assumption that SMM or e-marketing may influence business performance. Tafesse and Wien (2018) show a substantial and positive relationship between the core dimensions of SMM and firm performance but note that active presence alone may not result in high social media performance. In addition, the social media algorithm does not guarantee that a firm's content will reach a broad audience based on the active presence or customer engagement. Firms should decide on the type of activity based on the specific social media platform being used (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard 2013). The literature also supports a positive association between social media performance and marketing performance. More specifically, the literature suggests that favorable social media feedback, increased follower base, and web traffic, have a strong and positive effect on market-based

outcomes of increased sales and customer loyalty (Chatterjee & Kar 2020). However, these findings were limited to Indian firms that engage in active SMM. As such, this study intends to fill the gap by exploring the relationship between SMM implementation and business performance among SBs in Trinidad and Tobago. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework relating to SMM and SB Performance in the context of Trinidad and Tobago.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework – SMM and SB Performance in Trinidad and Tobago**

Source: the authors

## Methodology

The study employed a qualitative approach to its research design. The exploratory, naturalistic and purposeful nature of the qualitative research design deemed it the most suitable approach for exploratory studies (Abdou & Zaazou 2021). The data collection involved the use of synchronous semi-structured interviews. This method allowed the elaboration of responses and further probing to clarify the answers. It also facilitated nonverbal recording cues, such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and observing other non-verbal cues, which would result in better communication with the interviewee (DeCarlo 2018). The semi-structured interview method involved using an interview guide with solid theoretical support from the literature (Dumay & Qu 2011).

## Sampling Technique

The non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed for this study. This process entailed using the researcher's knowledge of and judgement in the contribution of the participants to guide the

selection of participants (Taherdoost 2016). The qualifications for participation included three selection criteria: namely, (1) business owners must employ 25 or fewer persons (based on the Ministry of Finance's (MOF 2020) definition of micro and small enterprises); (2) maintain a social media presence by owning a business page(s) on a social media platform such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, operating their business website or utilizing social messaging/networking apps like WhatsApp to conduct business operations; and (3) must have been in existence before COVID-19.

### **Data Collection**

The primary data were collected over five weeks and involved a series of stages. First, a list of 101 potential participants was compiled from online searches on the Trinidad and Tobago business directory and two popular social media platforms, namely Facebook and Instagram, as well as referrals from small businesses owners. Second, the researchers verified the legitimacy of each business presence on social media by visiting the pages and searching for indicators of legitimacy, which included evidence of active customer reviews, a listed location, images of their products or services and follower/following count ratio. Third, a pre-notification e-mail was dispatched to the owner of each SB, followed by a formal invitation to participate in the study. Twenty-two qualified businesses agreed to participate. Although small, this sample size meets the Durst et al. (2021) range of 5 to 25 interviews. Our sample size of 22 fell within the authors' upper limit and was deemed appropriate. The majority of the participants were located in Trinidad (20) and represented seven business sectors, including food and beverage (9), tourism and event planning (3), health and personal care (3), retail services (3), transportation (2), childcare (1) and maintenance (1). Relative to experience, most businesses had less than five years of experience in the market (14) and employed less than ten employees (19). Each participant was given the option to be interviewed via the videoconferencing platform Zoom, or telephone. Both options satisfied the COVID-19 protocols and facilitated the ability to communicate in real time with geographically dispersed individuals (Ambagtsheer et al. 2019). All interviews were guided by an interview guide containing approximately 21 questions to ensure consistency, adequately address the research objectives, prevent unnecessary distractions and keep each session within an appropriate timeframe. Additionally, each interview was recorded and transcribed by one of the authors of this paper.

### **Data Analysis and Results**

For analysis, the study followed the guidelines discussed by Punch & Oancea (2014), which involved a series of steps. Firstly, each recording was transcribed by one of the authors. Each author independently coded all the interviews by categorizing the statements into key themes, sub-themes and categories using axial coding. The authors repeated the coding process until all significant ideas from each interview were grouped into themes, sub-themes and categories. Finally, every theme, sub-theme and category was discussed by the co-authors and disagreements were resolved before the process continued. A description is presented in Table 1.

### **The Themes**

#### **Theme 1 - The Effects of COVID-19 on Business Operations**

The disruption to business operations is experienced across both islands, although the effects appeared direr for tourist operators in Tobago. Both participants from Tobago reported substantial losses because of the border closure. The participants indicated that although domestic travel persisted during the pandemic, the amount of business received from local tourism was insufficient to justify operations. In addition, the ongoing governmental restrictions is causing severe difficulty in planning and coordinating operations to accommodate domestic tourists. Our results also show that the impact of COVID-19 on

business operations also varied by type of business (brick and mortar vs online establishments). Based on the interviews conducted, 12 SBs were classified as brick and mortar businesses, i.e. they operate from fixed locations.

**Table 1. Summary of Themes, Sub-themes and Categories**

Themes	Sub-themes	Categories
Effects of COVID-19	Operational challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent and lengthy lockdown measures</li> <li>• Closure of businesses</li> <li>• Changes to business hours</li> <li>• Severity of effect vary by type of business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Severe effects on tourism</li> <li>• Brick and mortar businesses unable to cope</li> <li>• Restaurants and retail service sectors significantly affected</li> </ul>
	Human resource challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee retention</li> <li>• Employee productivity</li> <li>• Employee compensation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High absenteeism and turnover</li> <li>• Inability to support staff during pandemic</li> <li>• Cutbacks and layoffs</li> <li>• Rely on government assistance to pay staff</li> </ul>
	Changes in consumer behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant reduction in demand</li> <li>• Panic buying of food and medical supplies</li> <li>• Low demand for hedonic purchases</li> <li>• Shopping anxiety</li> </ul>
	Supply chain challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to plan and forecast demand</li> <li>• Rationing of supplies</li> <li>• Cash flow constraints</li> <li>• Unable to receive timely supplies</li> <li>• Higher prices</li> </ul>
Decision to Adopt SMM during COVID-19 pandemic	Internal influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newly established businesses were more comfortable with SMM</li> <li>• Personal experience with using social media platforms</li> <li>• Age of the entrepreneur</li> <li>• Reduction in spending on traditional advertising media</li> <li>• Availability of financial resources</li> </ul>
	Situational Influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desperation driven by restrictions and lockdown measures</li> <li>• Changing consumer patterns</li> <li>• New business opportunities</li> <li>• Learning through trial and error</li> </ul>
Implementing SMM	Early Adopters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low cost</li> <li>• Ad hoc implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used mainly for information and online ordering</li> <li>• Unaware of how to optimize the use of the media</li> </ul>
Performance	Absence of evaluation and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change to sales but unable to monitoring effects on customer acquisition and retention</li> </ul>

Seemingly, the pandemic had a more negative effect on this type of business than those with an online presence. Perhaps the variations in impact could be attributed to the nature of the local government's restrictions to curb the spread of COVID-19, which predominantly focused on cutting face-face-contact and large congregations. The participants operating brick and mortar businesses also reported crippling losses incurred as a result of government's ongoing lockdown measures. Closure of business operations means no sales revenue despite having to service recurring expenses such as rent, utilities, and salaries. For those allowed to operate, the drastic decline in sales revenue added to the financial stress and anxieties. Although there was a rollback of restrictions in Trinidad and Tobago towards the latter half of 2020, many customers would have been laid-off and made drastic cuts to their consumption patterns. Many citizens also experienced severe financial difficulties, which ultimately resulted in a significant change in type of goods purchased and quantities. Further, the purchase of non-essential and luxury items has been drastically reduced because of the uncertainties, panic and anxieties being experienced. The employees also endured hardship. During lockdown periods, most businesses are unable to continue to pay employees. Several of the interviewees relied on local government assistance programs. They assisted with and encouraged employees to apply for governmental for government support in the form of salary relief grants, income support grants, food hampers and other social assistance programmes.

In other cases, the disruptions resulted in consumer panic buying, causing an enormous logistical and operational challenge for some SBs, particularly those in the food sector. In some cases, retailers were overwhelmed with rising demand and a challenging supply chain. To cope with the surge, some businesses rationed supplies or altered business hours. Others faced rising prices from suppliers, which could not have been passed on to the consumers. This increased operational cost was also evident by the additional security measures that had to be implemented to continue with operations and the high overtime cost for those servicing the increased demands. These rising costs of operation contributed to the reduced return on investment. The carnage from the COVID-19 pandemic also had a drain on the skills and human capital available to SBs to continue business operations. Many SBs lost talented and trained staff due to the forced displacement, restrictions, business closure and anxieties. This turnover caused additional costs in hiring and training new employees. Further, the level of productivity seemed remarkably lower for some. These losses have forced these businesses to adapt by re-strategizing and seeking alternative avenues to increase sales. Examples of these strategic measures mentioned by participants include the addition of new services, such as a delivery options, flexible opening hours, and offering online ordering platforms.

However, in sharp contrast to the traditional bricks and mortar companies, the non-traditional establishments had a more practical short-term response. Many businesses already had a digital presence, and some had already integrated social media into their marketing campaigns. With some offering e-commerce activities, COVID-19 disruptions resulted in increased sales opportunities from new and existing customers. The digital presence minimized the disruptions associated with restricted movement and governmental lockdowns. The results also showed that the COVID-19 pandemic forced owners to rethink and reconstruct business models to survive and even thrive during the pandemic. Our interviews suggest that many SBs are reimagining what they offer and how they serve the local market. Several businesses are also changing their business models although. For example, our findings showed that many SBs are evaluating the idea of adding e-commerce and online ordering systems. Others are expanding the range of services they offer and targeting new segments of the local markets.

## **Theme 2 – The Decision to Adopt Social Media during COVID-19 Lockdowns**

The results showed that most SBs rely heavily on social media alternatives to reach target audiences. The majority of interviewees (20) revealed that they now rely heavily on social media due to the pandemic. The RBV supports this finding as it alludes to the fact that businesses will mobilize resources and take strategic actions to respond to external changes in the business environment, such as the COVID-19 pandemic

(Venciūtė 2018). The responses show that the less-experienced business owners and recently established businesses appeared more open towards integrating digital technology into their sales and marketing approaches than the older and more experienced business owners. Additionally, many older business owners seemed to be sceptical of the usefulness of SMM for business. For these owners, the decision to adopt SMM was primarily driven by younger family members, who assisted with creating a social media presence. Only two interviewees did not use social media. They justified their response by stating that the traditional face-to-face approach worked for them, although they admitted that social media could be helpful during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There was a recurring trend of participants emphasizing the increased investment in sponsored ads during the pandemic, which is an option offered on the Facebook and Instagram platforms. Businesses across varying sectors recognized the benefit of using this advertising tool to gain potential customers. Our results also show that most interviewees either have plans to enhance their SMM presence or have recently upgraded their SMM strategy. With the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic, the results show that small businesses recognize the pivotal role of SMM for growth and survival. Another significant finding about the increased reliance on social media is that most participants view traditional marketing methods as obsolete and use SMM as their primary form of advertising.

### **Theme 3 – Implementing SMM by SBs**

The findings from the interview suggest that the majority of SBs were at the early stages of adopting SMM and can be classified as experimental adopters. Many are still trying to understand the media's potential and have not fully executed an active presence or actions to engage consumers. Only a few interviewees were keenly monitoring the social media analytics. Our results show that adoption is primarily driven by a sense of desperation to survive during the lockdown measures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Most companies have adopted a low-cost strategy towards managing social media marketing activities and have either built the social media themselves or received assistance from family members and personal associates. Updates are based on the business owner time and resources.

However, several SBs interviewed indicated that despite the ad hoc presence, they intend to use digital marketing, including social media platforms post COVID-19. The findings also revealed little to no structure towards the implementation process, with most content being hastily developed. Further, the interviews suggest that the use of SMM vary by the age of the SB, with owners of more recognized companies being more cautious in adopting the media than newly established operations. For example, one business owner whose business has been in existence for more than 35 years stated that the implementation of his SMM strategy was slow and organic and materialized over two to three years. However, another owner whose business has been in operation for just over two years stated that her presence was almost instant and started with a personal social media page. The results also reinforced the capacity challenge, and several owners indicated that they lack the requisite skills and competencies to manage the SMM functions effectively.

In summary, the findings revealed three main factors affecting SMM adoption during the COVID-19 pandemic, including current business realities and responses, business age, and internal resources. The onset of the coronavirus pandemic accelerated the adoption of SMM. SMM is viewed as a new territory for many of the older businesses with more experienced owners. Therefore, the transition from mainly traditional marketing to SMM is gradual. For new and emerging companies with less experienced business owners, SMM is viewed as the latest trend and a necessity for success. For these businesses, SMM is more likely to be adopted much earlier. Limited internal resources, which many of the participants commented on, can prevent some critical steps of the SMM strategy from being carried out, affecting its quality and structure. Some of the participants of this study believe they lack the resources to pursue an online business strategy.



**Theme 4 – SMM and the Financial Performance**

The findings suggest that SBs had very few mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of their social media presence. Interviewees admitted to a hasty implementation, with little to no consideration of monitoring and evaluating the success of their SMM efforts. Further, the SBs interviewed in this study seemed to have only developed a presence on social media as a COVID-19 defense strategy, with minimal implications for long-term business decisions. This conclusion is supported by the following comments

Most of the SBs we interviewed in this study admitted that social media is critical for their survival during the pandemic. However, they were unable to quantify the amount of revenue received from the strategy. In addition, the interview responses revealed that systematic tracking of data is not a common occurrence among the SBs interviewed. All of the participants maintain a system to track their sales. However, the systematic tracking of specific aspects such as social media performance, new customer acquisition and customer loyalty is not prioritized. It may be one explanation for why the full impact of SMM implementation is not realized.

**Discussion**

Overall, the study offers a unique perspective on SB and SMM. It also adds to the limited research on the impact of COVID-19 in developing countries. More specifically, the study provides insights into the adoption of SMM by SB in Trinidad and Tobago and perceptions of its impact on overall business performance amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. While various researchers propose that SMM is necessary for business survival in the post-pandemic period, the issues and challenges faced by SBs in developing countries are overlooked (Salam et al. 2021).

This study addressed the gap. The findings support the notion that SMM is an essential tool for business survival and sustainable competitive advantage. It contributes to existing research by highlighting the intervening factors which either enhance or impede the relationship between effective SMM implementation and improved business performance. Also, the conceptual framework developed in the study summarizes the unique experience SBs in Trinidad and Tobago during the COVID-19 pandemic, which may be different from the experiences of small and larger firms in other geographical locations. Finally, the study explores the perceptions of SB owners on the impacts of SMM during the COVID-19 and revealed mixed results. It demonstrated numerous challenges SB owners confront in planning and implementing the SMM strategy.

It further unraveled a host of difficulties in monitoring and evaluating performance-related outcomes. Many owners could not have accounted for the effect of SMM on overall performance. In addition, several owners appeared unconvinced that SMM can be a viable alternative in the post-pandemic environment. The study uncovered different reasons for this view which were mainly attributed to the characteristics of the SB and its owner, the level of resources, skills and competencies to manage the strategy and lack of monitoring performance indicators. These findings expose the unique challenges of SBs in a developing country, which may be very different from those encountered in developed countries. SBs in developed countries usually have access to well-developed infrastructure, fast broadband speed, access to specialist training and services, and easy access to technology.

Further, this study exposes the specific challenges in responding to the abrupt disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic from a developing country context. The findings can further explain why SBs in developing countries respond differently to SMM compared to their counterparts in developed countries (Rugova & Prenaj 2016). Finally, the findings identified the significant challenges SB face during the COVID-19 pandemic but also recognized the resilience of many SB, as some pursued new marketing opportunities despite the disruptions and uncertainties. It also supports the view that small businesses can enjoy a robust recovery post-COVID-19 pandemic due to their innovativeness and flexibility. Still, strategic support is needed to bolster business owners' self-efficacy, efficiency, and effectiveness (UNCTAD 2021).

### Implications for Managers

The study also presents practical implications for SBs. Firstly, it demonstrates SMM acceptance by SBs and highlights the unique challenges owners and managers experience with this technology. It is helpful to owners and policymakers as it unearths the future potential of this technology for SBs. Second, the study revealed several internal constraints which impede the effective use of the technology. Knowledge of these constraints will be necessary to owners, policymakers, and business professionals interested in promoting SMM among SBs in Trinidad and Tobago. Also, the findings revealed that some business owners do not believe that their social media performance support significant financial returns and therefore pay little to no attention to it. While sales are valuable, especially during this pandemic, the other essential marketing outcomes such as customer loyalty and customer acquisition appear to be overlooked. Finally, policymakers can meet with small business owners to create mutually beneficial solutions to address increased unemployment following the onset of COVID-19 and the limited resources available to these businesses. Additionally, business owners commented on the costly and challenging process of implementing an e-commerce platform. Therefore, governmental authorities and policymakers can work with independent financial institutions to devise solutions to make the transition to online marketing and e-commerce easier.

### Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Despite its relevance, the study is not without limitations which create opportunities for future research. An in-depth analysis of the magnitude of the impact of the different constraints unearthed by this study can help further our understanding of the use of SMM by SB and add to the academic and managerial merits of this stream of work. Additionally, extending the study to other Caribbean territories can deepen our understanding of SMM and SBs. Future researchers may want to build on the proposed conceptual model and verify its applicability in different research environments. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the perceptions and use of SMM by SBs in Trinidad and Tobago during a crisis, which can help bolster response and mitigate future challenges.

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## BOOK REVIEW

### Book

Essentials of Strategic Management  
Gamble JE, Peteraf PA & Thompson AA  
2014 New York, USA: McGraw Hill ISBN: 978-0078112898

### Reviewer

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If the passion is to learn, apply, and teach strategic management, then the book—*Essentials of Strategic Management: The Quest for Competitive Advantage*—is the excellent reference. The book emphasizes the practical application of the real-world interventions toward better learning of strategic management. The utilization of strategic management positioning theory and resource-based theory is well explained. Its coverage of business ethics, core values, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability is also excellent. The quality case collection is characterized by student appeal, teachability, and suitability for the utilization of concepts and analytical interventions. This book has relevant reference to implement strategic management tools for industry attractiveness and competitive strengths, overall company strategy, uniqueness drivers, profit formula, matrix segmentation, comparative market positions, corporate direction, resource bundles, representative value chain, industry key success factors, factors in SWOT, functional scorecards, sustainability balanced scorecard, changing culture, and departmental calendars, among others.

Factors that affect changes in industries and competitive conditions are well explained in this book. Understanding the environment and industry is a conscious awareness and decision for existence for both entrepreneurs and organizations. Organic activities are not enough for an organization to endure. The book suggests strategic moves like integration, franchising, joint ventures and mergers and acquisitions to capture greater value during the period of strategy implementation. Further, it provides tips for organizations and firms to succeed. The book explains well through the stories of selected organizations as to how they shift strategies with agility to overcome limiting antecedents. The common types of industry key success factors are comprehensive enough to explain the problems and solutions for firms to endure. In some critical situations, the book includes a comprehensive checklist of success factors that managers can implement, though the factors could have been more effective if they were explained more in detail. Managers can also consider the innovative marketing strategies that include comparative advertising that can enhance credibility of products. The book classifies strategic options and generic strategies depending on the chosen market coverage and the type of competitive advantage, whether low cost or differentiation, of the products, services, total costs and firm. The authors frame well the formulation of effective strategies through resource bundles and evaluation of cost or uniqueness drivers. The in-depth analysis of value chain paves way to creative interventions for a firm to succeed. For entrepreneurs and for corporations, a recommended position is to start with differentiation strategy that creates value, higher profit, and uniqueness among the perceptions of chosen customers that are difficult for competitors to match. Indeed, differentiation strategy is a stable intervention, yet its development requires great minds and discipline.

The book also links different functional departments. Cascading the strategy at the level of functional departments is essential while keeping the clarity, morale and passion of the managers and employees. These actions need to be synchronized with teams to move together as one organization in gaining results. The book clarifies the boundaries for growth. A firm's success is not limited to a nation, but the world is the playing field for modern-day organizational or business activities. The book leads to sustainability of firms. Keeping a healthy and active culture among people in an organization, the achievements of long-term profitability while abiding the law, living responsibly and conserving the environment become realistic. Moreover, the tables and graphs enable the strategist and students to consider critical factors and visualize positions for quality strategic management decisions. The chapters are arranged thematically and relate to firm strategy, managerial process of crafting a strategy, strategy analytical tools, resource-based view of the firm, strategic approaches, strategy options, corporate-level and functional strategy, ethics and values and the compelling conceptual framework to firm's operating excellence, competitive advantage, and good performance. The book is comprehensive and has practical application through knowledge and tools that are generated by readers and users. The resource-based view of a firm and strategic management positioning theory made the salient variables in strategy-building and learning clear. The interesting cases and their stories serve as guidelines to strategic management of firms and managers in similar context. The book, however, listed comprehensive and actionable strategic options specific details about concepts and terminologies. It is important to set strategic blueprints so that stakeholders can understand the needs, their roles, and what they can contribute. This is an efficient way to dissect the missing pieces toward enduring organizational success. This book gives manager confidence to be involved in problem-solving consultations and collaborations with other organizations and industries.

With these drastic changes in the current age of COVID-19 pandemic, and African Swine Fever Outbreak that affect global landscapes of different enterprises and entrepreneurship, the next edition of the book may highlight stars, resilience, bankruptcy, turnaround, operating excellence and growth strategies. The drivers for change are quickly "mutating" and these external environments can be tough to be anticipated. A new edition of this book may help strategists to be equipped with proactive interventions and prompt reactivity to the emerging global concerns. Indeed, different business practitioners, researchers, firms and organizations are keenly interested in the management of disruptive innovations.

### Reviewer



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