Applied Project

Submission

LEARNER NUMBER	51704668
NAME	Lara Emanuelle Simões Braga
COURSE	Degree of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Business Studies
DISSERTATION TOPIC	A Research on How Covid-19 affects retail businesses in Ireland
SUPERVISOR	John Dunne
WORD COUNT	7790
DUE DATE	30 of November 2022

I certify that:

I consent to having my dissertation be retained in the library for the purpose of future research.

Yes ☒ No ☐

[Note that if no check boxes are selected, this dissertation will be regarded as NOT properly submitted, and may be subject to a late submission penalty]

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY STATEMENT

By checking the box below: I/we (if submitting on behalf of a group) certify that the assignment may be checked for plagiarism by electronic or other means and may be transferred and stored in a database for the purposes of data-matching to help detect plagiarism. The assignment has not previously been submitted for assessment in any other module or to any other institution.

☒ Agree

Signature: Lara Emanuelle Simões Braga

Date: 29/11/2022

Notes:



A Research on How Covid-19 affects retail businesses in Ireland

Compiled by:

Lara Emanuelle Simões Braga

This project is submitted in part fulfilment of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Business Studies.

Independent College Dublin

November 2022.

A Research on How Covid-19 affects retail businesses in Ireland

Thesis Approved:

_____

_____

_____

Abstract

During Covid-19, as a spectator, I saw the impact that the pandemic caused on the world.

Business' during this time closed their doors and owners had to shut their companies' doors. Managers and employees lost their jobs and customers had to isolate from their normal day's tasks to ensure their safety and the safety of those around them. This fact made me to do research to facilitate and understand how to prevent and prepare the business, owners, managers, employees and consumers/clients for any future possible risks or crisis.

The good performance of the business is essential for the environment of the society because they are the ones who deliver the goods and service to the society. In accordance with the Corporate Social Responsibility, some business performances can benefit the society. The businesses are part of our lives, and it is important to understand the knowledge of how Covid-19 pandemic affected them and how future crisis' can be avoided to benefit to the economy and society.

This thesis provides a search from different points of views to fulfil the purpose which is to deliver enough data to businesses to prepare strategies for future crisis.

I hope this research can deliver enough knowledge to the readers to improve business`s approaches and knowledge towards the progression of their operation and the environment.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction 11

1. Introduction 11

1.1. Background of research 11

1.2. Rationale for the study 11

1.3. Statement of the research objectives 12

1.4. Information gathering & data collection 12

1.5. Expected Outcomes of the study 13

1.6. Chapter by chapter Overview 13

Chapter 2: Literature Review 14

2. Literature Review 14

2.1. The strategies, used by the business in Ireland, ... 14

2.2. How did the Covid-19 guidelines, affect employees, ... 16

2.3. The quality of customer service, during the global pandemic, ... 18

2.4. The changes implemented by businesses in Ireland during Covid-19, ... 20

2.5. The advantages and disadvantages of the changes, Lessons learned from Covid-19. 22

Chapter 3: Methodology 24

3. Methodology 24

3.1. Philosophy Employed 24

3.2. Research Method - Justification for the adoption of method 25

3.3. Research Approach 26

3.4. Research Process – Data collection 26

3.5. Sampling technique and sample size 29

3.6. Analysis method employed method employed 30

3.6.1. Keywords and codes relating to the interview with a customer. 31

3.6.1. Keywords and codes relating to the interview with a customer. 32

3.6.2. Keywords and codes relating to the interview with a supervisor 1. 33

3.6.2. Keywords and codes relating to the interview with a supervisor 1. 34

3.6.2. Keywords and codes relating to the interview with a supervisor 1. 35

3.6.3. Keywords and codes relating to the interview with a supervisor 2. 36

3.6.4. Keywords and codes relating to the interview with an owner. 37

3.7. Ethical Section 38

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion 39

4. Findings and Discussion 39

4.1. The strategies, used by the business in Ireland, ... 39

4.2. How did the Covid-19 guidelines, affect employees 45

4.3. The quality of customer service, during the global pandemic 52

4.4. The changes implemented by business in Ireland during Covid-19, ... 60

4.5. The advantages and disadvantages of the changes, Lessons learned from Covid-19. 67

4.6. NVIVO 73

Chapter 5: Conclusion, Limitations and Recommendations 74

5. Conclusion 74

5.1. Limitations 75

5.2. Recommendation 75

Appendices 76

6. Appendix I: Informed Consent for survey Quantitative 76

6.1. Appendix II: Survey Questionnaire 78

6.2. Appendix IV: Interview Schedule 86

6.3. Appendix V: Interview Questions and Transcript in total 87

6.3.1. First Interview 87

6.3.2. Second Interview 94
6.3.3. Third Interview 98
6.3.4. Fourth Interview 101
6.5. Appendix VI: Informed Consent for Interviews Qualitative (Signed) 103
6.5.1. Informed Consent for first Interview 103
6.5.2. Informed Consent for second Interview 106
6.5.3. Informed Consent for third Interview 109
6.5.4. Informed Consent for third Interview 112
6.6. Appendix VII: Ethical Form A 115
6.7. Appendix IX: Template for Question Survey and Interview 118
7. References 124

List of pictures

Picture 1 39

Picture 2 40

Picture 3 40

Picture 4 41

Picture 5 42

Picture 6 43

Picture 7 43

Picture 8 45

Picture 9 46

Picture 10 46

Picture 11 47

Picture 12 48

Picture 13 49

Picture 14 50

Picture 15 52

Picture 16 52

Picture 17 53

Picture 18 53

Picture 19 54

Picture 20 54

Picture 21 55

Picture 22 56

Picture 23 57

Picture 24 58

Picture 25 60
Picture 26 60
Picture 27 61
Picture 28 62
Picture 29 63
Picture 30 64
Picture 31 65
Picture 32 67
Picture 33 67
Picture 34 68
Picture 35 68
Picture 36 69
Picture 37 70
Picture 38 71
Picture 39 71

Chapter 1

Introduction

A Research on How Covid-19 affects retail businesses in Ireland

1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic of 2019 has globally impacted many factors such as the environment, people's lives, economy, and businesses. The research expects to deliver insights of tactics for owners, managers, employees, and consumers in relation to a future crisis and aim for progression for a better environment.

1.1.Background of research

This research has the objective to deliver the experience, its affects and how businesses survived during Covid-19. The objective is to help businesses evaluate themselves. This thesis will give some insights to creation and managing of strategic methods to support businesses to survive any future crisis events.

1.2. Rationale for the study

The research question is: How Covid-19 affect retail businesses in Ireland?

This research is essential as a component of Business studies and as a future Business Analyst this thesis has a particular interest in the areas of:

- Strategic Management: to improve ways to manage crisis' like Covid-19, profit, efficiency, company expansion etc.
- Consumer Behaviour: to analyse the different perspectives of consumers `changes` during the pandemic period and improve the quality of service and business performance.
- Corporate Social Responsibility: to strengthen the progress of the business to handle future situations like Covid-19 and to support the stakeholders and the environment.

This research purpose is to find out the impact of the pandemic and how businesses survived during this time, it also takes in account some aspects to analyse and improve in terms of strategic management, consumer behaviour and corporate social governance. This research can give new insights to an improvement for businesses, managers, employees, and consumers in future crisis.

1.3. Statement of the research objectives

1. To find out which kind of approaches were used during/after Covid-19 by the business to maintain their revenue.
2. To evaluate strategies used by management to support their employees to go through the pandemic and make profit.
3. To evaluate how did the guidelines set out by the government of Covid-19 impacted employees.
4. To find out if the quality of customer service had increased or decreased during Covid-19 and how businesses manage it.
5. To value and determine which changes will be implemented by businesses during/after Covid-19.
6. To explore the advantages and disadvantages businesses experienced during/after Covid-19 and the lessons learned from it.

1.4. Information gathering & data collection

This research was conduct by mixed methods: quantitative and qualitative research. It was used as clear narrative of sequential explanatory making use of both primary (quantitative survey and qualitative interviews) and secondary research (literature review).

1.5. Expected Outcomes of the study

It is expected to find out enough results from the overall research (surveys, interview, literature review), to be able to deliver a understand of the impacted and help, evaluate and prepare the necessary strategies to prevent for imminent crisis and the improvement of the employees, consumers, managers, and businesses.

1.6. Chapter by chapter Overview

The first chapter is the introduction of the research question, purpose and objectives. The second chapter is the literature review, where it is a narrative quotted and commented on by professional authors. The third chapter brings the methodology of the thesis, that chapter explains in details the study of the method and the process' of the research.

The fourth chapter talks about the findings and discussion, where the data will be analyzed and the results made by the primary reasearch, survey and interviews. That results are also compared with the literature review, secondary research.

The chapter five is the conclusion of this reasearch and the fulfilment of the main purpose of the thesis which is "How Covid-19 affects retail businesses in Ireland", concluding the research and then to be able to provide a general recommendation for this issue.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

A Research on How covid-19 affects retail businesses in Ireland

2. Literature Review

The Covid-19 pandemic arrived in a big wave, destroyed, and impacted the world in a way that some countries are still recovering from it. In this thesis we will evaluate the strategies and changes used maintain or improve the progression of the businesses.

2.1. Which strategies were used by the business in Ireland to keep the business making profit?

One of the key elements of my thesis is to determine which strategies were used by business to maintain profit margins globally during the Covid-19.

> The first author reviewed said that "The global pandemic shifted the aspects, so people see things, at work, life, career and business matters". (Gupta, 2021)

The traditional strategies used before by businesses were forced to change and had to become more flexible around the interpretation of scenarios/situations. Businesses can structure its strategies and focus on their company gaining income, but also the focus on increasing revenue.
My second article was stated by an Organization of Economic that brings strategies to businesses to survive the pandemic.

> "For businesses to have success during this pandemic, they have to quickly respond to the change and have the skill to adapt to continue in the market." (Menon, 2020)

Businesses attempted new strategies not previously endeavoured before and only ventured into this new territory due to the demand of the restraints from Covid-19. For businesses to thrive during this strained period, they had to adapt in different areas, such as their work ethic, routine of the employees and specific products offered.

The third article reviewed gives strategies relating to consumer needs.

> "Businesses which focuses on introducing new products, answers the consumer needs, and it is able to shift the services and can have a great success". (Dago Diedrich, 2021)

This strategy is more specific and advises businesses to focus on improvement in their products and customer service.

Another article examined talks about the uncertainty in relation to businesses making profit during the pandemic.

> "Businesses were challenged to maintain profit margins, since the global economic insecurity in relation to Covid-19". (Priya, 2020)

Some businesses survived and thrived, whilst others struggled and closed their doors. Businesses should adapt their strategies, and their results are the key to a long-term success during a pandemic.

The last article evaluated the businesses actions as they are crucial to their improvement.

> "The dynamic approach to the innovation of the businesses performance is a key focus point to deal with any problem". (Vivy Kristinae, 2020)

Businesses that chose to change their perspectives, have a different daily routine, produced a different product and discovered new ways to improve that can benefit their businesses.

2.2. How did the Covid-19 guidelines from the government affect employees? And which strategies were used by the management team to help their employees go through that at the same time making money?

During the initial outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, guidelines were introduced to protect and reduce the numbers of people getting infected. The guidelines made by the government affected the interactions between people and businesses.

In the first article I examined the information surrounding the guidelines of the companies the strategies followed and how those directly affected their business.

> "The 2m distance and the global lockdown made from the small to the well-known companies faced effects which had companies re-look at their management plan." (Priya, 2020)

Managers had to face, not just challenges in relation their companies finance, but concentrate on their routine of enforcing balance between stabilization of the company and safety of their employees and consumers.

> Another article that is specific to retail businesses, with relation to Covid-19 states that, "The retail business is a section which requires a large amount of labour and with the pandemic situation, businesses had been affected and because of these employees have suffered severely due to the pandemic." (Mohammed Ali Bait Ali Sulalman, 2020)

The retail sector needs the employees to reorganize the store and to focus on the needs of the consumer. Consumers have reduced their "shopping" due to the reduction of social interaction, lockdown, and following of guidelines. Because of this, the company had to cut hours of employees and introduce layoffs for employees.

The next article reviewed is about the isolation of the employees, during the pandemic.

> "Guidelines and specific classification had been implemented to help the isolation of the employees which was detected with Covid-19 symptoms." (Ireland, 2022)

Businesses had to adapt to the new rules after an employee was infected with the virus. The manager had to find other staff to cover that specific employee's shift. In some situations, businesses had to close their doors for multiple weeks, due to an outbreak amongst all staff members.

The next article talks about the number of employees in Ireland which had been directly affected by the pandemic.

> "The number of workers which had been affected by the pandemic it is 57%, which is 34% working from home and 23% which had their work hours affected". (Mangan, 2020)

This data highlights how badly both businesses and employees had been affected.

> The last article emphasized the consequences facing the employees, that states "The employees had lost their jobs because of the closure of the business or had been fired due to the pandemic". (Slaughter, 2020)

From this last article, it is understood that the management team had to take drastic strategies that involved the firing of employees and reducing their hours to also not closing their doors and continuing to survive in the market. Businesses that didn't do that in this period of pandemic had to close their doors for good.

2.3. Did the quality of customer service increase or decrease during the global pandemic? How was it managed? Which alternatives was used? And can it be improved and how?

The customer service will always be a challenging area for any businesses, however during the pandemic the customer service had to be improved.

The first article is about how creative the businesses had to be during this time, trying to fulfil an urgent matter and the needs of the consumer.

> The article from the company McKinsey says that "Innovative and caring tools is there to address the consumers' needs. The innovations need to be stronger to tie the era of Covid-19." (Rachel Diebner, 2020)

This article gives us an idea on how creative and quickly the strategies must be implemented to attend the consumer needs.

The next author reviewed talks about the era of Covid-19 which assisted businesses with re-writing their policies.

> "The businesses of the retail sector has to stop thinking everything will go back to normality, because it won`t get back to "normal" anytime soon." (Yohn, 2020)

Businesses had to break their rules and start again if they wanted to improve their situation. The strategy would sometimes be created on a day-by-day scenario, depending on the situation. Some businesses had improvement, but other businesses might encounter no such luck.

> The third article evaluated is more specific in relation to the type of products that consumer's needs, which states that "The consumer needs increase in relation to healthy food, where women were more worried about getting infected, than men. The elderly population had more fear with Covid-19, compared to younger people, so they avoided shopping to mitigate their risk". (Fazel Hesham, 2021)

This article highlights that the retail businesses are trying to focus on increasing their stock and providing their consumers with promotions in these specific products. Businesses tried to influence their consumers in purchasing more quantity of their products.

> This next article reviewed talked about the reduction of consumers purchasing in physical stores, the author says that "The method to do shopping `face-to-face` has been reduced, as nowadays consumers had been choosing online shopping instead. However, consumers still need to touch and see the products to make their final purchase". (Sayyida Sayyida, 2021)

Businesses, which were against the technology or the online market, must learn quickly or be a pioneer to achieve the interest of the consumer to ensure the continuous purchase in their store.

The last author I have examined says that “The consumers purchase habits will be modified by the rules of Covid-19, business have to adapt their products, services, and add innovative technology to attend to the consumer’s needs”. (Sheth, 2020)

From this last author it is understood that the consumers purchases have been unbalanced since they were unable to predict the needs or the target or market. Businesses had to sometimes adapt daily and quickly make a strategy to achieve the purchase from the consumer. Some businesses went straight to online shopping, others continued with their physical stores and just used their website/social media.

2.4. Considering the changes implemented by businesses in Ireland during Covid-19, what changes will continue throughout for businesses to ensure wellbeing for both staff and customers?

Businesses had adapted numerous strategies to survive Covid-19 and some of these strategies/changes will continue running in their businesses to ensure wellbeing for both workers and consumer.

The first author I had reviewed talks about the future of businesses after Covid-19.

> “Some types of positions will disappear, others will face growth and some positions will be re-evaluated. New types of business will emerge with those new opportunities.” (McDonald, 2020)

Some businesses will create new sectors and new job positions to facilitate the growth of the company and prevent/prepare for any future crisis. Others positions in some businesses will disappear due to a lack of necessity during Covid-19.

The second author talks about the return to work saying some guidelines from the government will continue to be followed.

> "The employee has to be careful/aware once returning to work as some guidelines will be reviewed and adapted in accordance with the government." (McMenamin, 2020)

Relating to what this author has said, some companies have been continuing with the use of the masks, some employees feel more comfortable with that, but for consumers the use of them is personal. Other businesses continue to provide the hand sanitiser in the entrance to consumers and staff to avoid future infections.

The third author emphasises that the digital resources should be used after Covid-19.

> "In relation to innovation of businesses to survive during and after the Covid pandemic, it is advised to continue using digital resources, that will help in networking and the creation/design of innovative products relating with the reality of "social distance". (Morales, 2021)

The digital resource is a main strategy for the business of the future.

> The next author says, "The best strategy for retail businesses is selling their products in two ways, in physical and online platforms, this will help in different ways and increase the retailer`s merchandise." (P.R.S. Sarma, 2021)

It is understood the strategy for retail businesses is to continue/start in online platforms to sell their products, and it will be beneficial to their companies' performance.

The last author evaluated says that “The Covid-19 has devastated businesses around the world and impacted their economy, but through the improvement of active strategies and artificial intelligence, businesses can have success”. (Ehiorobo, 2020)

This author concludes that businesses have been considering the changes made during Covid-19 and evaluating strategies to maintain it in the future, and most of that is relating to marketing online, and improvement into the artificial intelligence to achieve success in the future.

2.5. What was the advantages and disadvantages of the changes to adapt the period of Covid-19? Lessons learned from Covid-19.

The era of Covid-19 has had a huge impact on the businesses around the world from this, and businesses have had advantages and disadvantages.

The first author talks about the behaviour of consumers during the pandemic.

> “Businesses around the world had/have to change the way they work to online businesses to attend to the new behaviours of consumers which had changed during the pandemic.” (Adebisi, 2022)

Some new behaviours have been introduced for businesses` advantages.

> The second author talks about the competitiveness during Covid-19 and the strategies created during the time and maintenance after that, “Businesses have been creating competitive approaches to overcoming Covid-19 and to add value, considering the effects of making decisions and improvements in relation to financial matters of the company.” (Nassar, 2021)

The author was trying to say that companies needed to adapt to the pandemic and some of these changes have remained because they have achieved great results.

> The third author says that “During and after Covid-19 businesses had/have to define their decision-makers, and that should be realistic with their goals.” (Dave Crick, 2020)

In accordance with the authors words, it is allowed to say that nowadays businesses have developed to become more actual and practical in their decision-making.

> The next author talks about the change in processes of supply chain, “Businesses built processes in relation to their supply chain during the pandemic, migrating to digital division networks. Improvement in consumer services, adding online promotion, cross-selling and supporting consumers.” (Jun Kang, 2020)

This article explains a little bit about the processes companies had to build/ migrate from physical to online, it was a challenge and slow, but it is/will be a good result. Businesses have been improving to continue with the use of the same strategy.

> The last author says that “Activities emerged to safeguard companies and stakeholders during the Covid pandemic. Companies are concentrating on digital technology as digital platforms facilitate an improvement in their consumer service.” (Mian M. Ajmal, 2021)

It is concluded from this article that businesses focus on digital technology to the improvement and protection of their sales, stakeholders and growth of company.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3. Methodology

In this chapter, it will be discussing the research methods and processes to explain and obtain a better understanding of how this research was carried out.

The main objective through surveys and interviews is to find out the affects, challenges, and mistakes to understand how the retail businesses survived during Covid-19. The data collected is projected to answer the main question of this thesis which is "How Covid-19 affects retail businesses in Ireland" and answer the sub question themes of this research.

3.1. Philosophy Employed

This research has an approach of mixed methods and is conducted by the Interpretivism constructivist philosophy based on the research of Max Weber (Bendix, 1998).

This philosophy allows the sample opportunity to answer the questions according to their experiences and translate a particular subject. The important part of this philosophy in this thesis is the understanding of the different opinions that people might have about the social world and their experience.

In this thesis, as a researcher, the interpretivism philosophy will look at businesses from different perspectives to obtain their different experiences from the workplace at the retail sector during/after Covid-19.

The Interpretivist is used to understand the world and their point of view, and to accomplish this is challenging. The Interpretivist needs to analyse and reflect in a set of situations and relations involving the variety of groups (owners, managers, employees, and consumers). The main goal is to gather all the date collected and come together to have a conclusion and opinion about it. (Mark N. K. Saunders, 1997)

This thesis has an inductive approach where the data collected is used to explore and identify the answer of this thesis, with the purpose to understand depth the nature of the issue. The questions created is based in the literature review. The inductive approach gives to the group selected to do the research an opportunity for them to understand their point of view. (Mark N. K. Saunders, 1997)

In relation with the Ontology the Interpretivists believe that the socially is created (Cameron, 2009) and it is possible to have multiple realities.

In relation to the Epistemology the Interpretivists believes that understanding is subjective, focus on descriptions, stories and new perspectives and explanations. The group research can give a new understanding to the worldview. (Mark N. K. Saunders, 1997)

This philosophy is used to obtain a necessary, valid amount of data and highlighting depth different perspectives to help me build a theory on the development of this research project.

3.2. Research Method - Justification for the adoption of method

The research method applied in the thesis is the mixed method carried out by quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (interviews) methods used to do my research to understand how Covid-19 affects retail business in Ireland.

The qualitative method chosen was because I want a depth answer, a diversity of opinions and experiences. Also, the quantitative chosen was because that will give me statistics and data from a specific group with the purpose of acquiring answers closer to the reality as possible. The combination of both can give me a balance of information obtained by surveys and interviews. The method chose is to understand the strategies and tactics used by businesses to survive during Covid-19.

The surveys were sent through an online link to owners, managers, and employees with multiple-choice questions. The questions were made to be able to know their truthful experiences and what their reality was during/after Covid-19.

The interview was set up by appointment, recorded through online video-call and face to face. The place for the interview was their workplace and in my own house. The interviews were with owner, supervisor, and consumer and it was conducted by me, the researcher.

The data acquired gave me new insights about the research question. Also, truthful experiences and reality from employees and consumers. The mixed method helped me obtain enough data to meet the objectives of this thesis research.

3.3. Research Approach

This research approach used the inductive approach and sequential explanatory narrative where the information acquired is applied to explore and identify the results in this thesis.

The inductive approach is linked to my primary research which is the surveys and interviews based in the literature review to show different points of view to identify the main question of this thesis.

The sequential explanatory narrative research design is related to the primary research where analysed the surveys and interviews to obtain an internal and external picture of the business situation during/after Covid-19. (Mark N. K. Saunders, 1997)

3.4. Research Process – Data collection

The research process of this thesis was conducted with the mix method, including quantitative research with surveys, and qualitative research with interviews.

The surveys were consisted of 21 questions with closed-ended multiple-choice and linear scale. Also, open-ended question with selection box. The reason to do closed-ended questions is because more real and relevant statistics is to be able to analyse the group research chosen. This structure

and method of survey questions gives enough numerical data to analyse and answer my research question. Also, a rich qualitative answer with the open-ended type of questions, gives a good balance to my surveys research.

The surveys were made online on the 4th of August of 2022 in the Google Forms (this platform can give quick perceptions online, and an answer in real-time).

The survey was distributed on the 29th of August of 2022 through Google Forms link to professionals in the retail sector as Owners, Managers and Employees. The link was sent through social media apps as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

In addition, the pilot of the questions were made on the 01st of July and after that I evaluated the questions in the matters of English grammar and linked them with the themes. Also, the questions were evaluated to match and carried out questions able to answer the main research question which is "How Covid-19 affects retail businesses in Ireland".

The goal was to achieve more than 100 answers from the group of professionals in retail sector in Ireland, but only 71 people agreed with the condition of the research, however because the question in the survey wasn't selected/mark as obligation in the beginning some people didn`t answer all the question (that was changed after 1 week), so some results will have a divergence. The period of the survey research was from 29th of August of 2022 and 21st of October.

The regions applied to the survey was counties Wexford, Wicklow (Rathdrum specifically) and Dublin.

The interviews consisted of 5 questions and has a difference between these questions and the survey questions. The questions made for the interview were based on the Literature Review and the 5 themes of this thesis. The interviews were carried out by open-ended questions with the purpose of obtaining more open and rich answers of their experiences and their point of view.

The period of the interviews was between 01st of October and 03rd of November.

The interviews were made in my house in Wexford, and the others interviews by video-call through WhatsApp. The duration of the interviews were around 10-20 minutes maximum and after each interview I personally transcribed the recorded audio to the Microsoft Word.

The interviews were recorded through my Huawei phone app, Also, every person I did the interview signed and agreed with the consent form. The consent was print and delivered by hand, signed, and agreed by the person before I scheduled the interview.

The interviews were made with one Owner, two Supervisors, and one Consumer. In total, it was 4 people interviewed.

The main goal was to do more than 5 interviews, but the time was short to conduct the interviews and transcribe and analyse each one. The group I did the interviews with was made with professionals in retail sector with more than 10 years' experience, and they worked during the Covid-19.

The group selected to do the interview is from Rathdrum (Wicklow) which includes: a big retail business, a small business, and a local customer.

This region was selected because I had an opportunity to work in the region during/after the pandemic and I realized the region had enough experience to give information on the truth about the effects in retail during the pandemic period. The full interviews and consents are in the Appendix section of this thesis.

The surveys and interviews were essential to give knowledge and data to analyse and evaluate the situation of the business during/after Covid-19. Also, it shows the strategies and changes applied during Covid-19.

3.5. Sampling technique and sample size

The sampling technique of this thesis is the non-probability sampling, which means this research provides a diversity of the techniques to choose samples.

The sample size of interviews was planned to do with members of a particular business and evaluated as a specific group. The surveys were planned to do with more than one business and regions and analysed as multiple groups. (Mark N. K. Saunders, 1997)

The sample chosen to do this research is a big retail business in Rathdrum which can give a better explanation of How Covid-19 affects the retail businesses and shows a contrast with a small retail business in the same region. The sample will give an overview to the theory rather than to do research with all population in Ireland.

Code	Position	Setting	Experience
S01	Supervisor in the store (Big retail business)	Rathdrum, Wicklow	20 years of experience of management in the retail sector
O01	Owner of the store (Small retail business)	Rathdrum, Wicklow	20 years of experience of management in the retail sector
S02	Supervisor in the store (Big retail business)	Rathdrum, Wicklow	10 years of experience of work in the retail sector
C	Customer	Rathdrum, Wicklow	10 years working in the consumer service sector

3.6. Analysis method employed method employed

The analysis of the data acquired through the mix methods and inductive approach.

The surveys and the interviews helped to understand the overview scenario related to the effects of businesses during Covid-19.

To improve the interpretation of the data, the surveys and interviews had been analysed together and interconnecting the data with themes, and the literature review. This analysis increased the quality of the interpretation of the data to answer the main question of this thesis.

In addition, the information acquired through surveys had generated graphics and statistics. The transcription and codes were generated through the interview. All this data collected was organized to be analysed and to make a triangulation together with the literature review.

The analysis of the data after had been acquired, refined, and then categorized in codes for analytical themes. This method of analysis consists in 4 aspects: understand and be familiar with the data; codifying the data; exploring and value the relation with the themes and the data; refine the themes and test it. (Mark N. K. Saunders, 1997)

3.6.1. Below are keywords and codes relating to the interview with a customer.

Customer 1 Theme 2	Keywords in the interview (Codes)
General costumer affects	Fear buying, kept buying out, panic buying.
Government Guidelines	Very difficult, social distance, other consumers not keeping guidelines, necessary rules.
Online shop	people venture online, people went to online shopping, easier, quicker.
NVIVO Theme Traumatic shopping experience because Covid-19	A lot to consider, take a toll on me, stress out, afraid to go to the shop, afraid to catch Covid-19, Painful.

Customer 1 Theme 3	Keywords in the interview (Codes)
Quality of customer service/experience	Similar, but less human contact, not getting answers to their issues, they try to maintain, customer service quality, didn't have the tools necessary, to solve problems, awful time awful
Business affects by Covid-19	Covid-19 impacted so many businesses, they try to maintain, same customer service, quality
NVIVO Theme Lack of support desk/online/phone/social media	Technical help desks, IP support, were left on the phone, couldn't solve them, they couldn't get access to the systems, they could help you, completely lost in limbo

3.6.1. Below are keywords and codes relating to the interview with a customer.

Customer 1 Theme 4	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Business preparation to another wave	Following the company guidelines, we're stabilized, people are aware, now better adapted.
Learnings from Covid-19	Take care of the customers, take care of themselves, what happened, what they needed to do, apply
NVIVO Theme Government conscious	Understanding the approach, people need, or don't need.

Customer 1 Theme 5	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Covid-19 positive advantages	only buying essential, focus on, spending less, paying attention,
Covid-19 negative disadvantages	Awful time, anxiety to shop, terrified,
Customer experience	Changed the way people have shopped, stress about a lot, worry shopping, going out
Lessons learned from Covid-19	It's made it better and worse for me, spray at the hand sanitizer, it's not even necessity, but it's just compulsion, still, keeping your distance,

3.6.2. Below are keywords and codes relating to the interview with a supervisor 1.

Supervisor 1 Theme 1	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Covid-19 challenges	as like everyone else was getting used, challenging times for everyone, like every other business, we just had to try our best to keep going
Business strategies	we all work together as a team; other ways, were very lucky
Challenges` Solution	Our staff looking after our staff, showed their strength

Supervisor 1 Theme 2	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Management style	Everyone was really cooperative, hopefully, we did a good job, keeping everyone safe and guidelines
Government Guidelines	we didn't have any problems, asking people to wear masks, we had all that signs up, we had all the guidelines of staff and customers,

3.6.2. Below are keywords and codes relating to the interview with a supervisor 1.

Supervisor 1 Theme 3	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Quality of customer service/experience	I would say decrease or increase, respect given them and minded, them the qualitative, they needed, probably, more conscious, during that time, customer server, hard time, minded them, as well, the customers.
Face to face interaction	it was hard, for everyone, like customers, staff, would be harder.
Business affects by Covid-19	hard time
NVIVO Theme Staff support and experience	Really, pull around stops, that time, they had to mind, themselves, had families, mind, their family, it was hard, for everyone.

Supervisor 1 Theme 4	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Business preparation to another wave	won't be as tolerant, so much, past few years, we would be able, to get through, again, like, we did the last time
Learnings from Covid-19	it will be prepared, if you have good staff, and, you have good management, know the guidelines, followed the guidelines, it should be ok.

3.6.2. Below are keywords and codes relating to the interview with a supervisor 1.

Supervisor 1 Theme 5	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Marketing online	No, we didn't do it, we didn't do any online,
Changes made because Covid-19	Deliveries, for a few locals, they didn't want, to coming, to the shop, just for a few, locals, they were afraid, to come out, they didn't want to come to places, that were crowded, only do that during Covid-19, we had some loyalty customer, with us, a while, lots of them, elderly, didn`t want to come out, just helped them out.
Changes made and continue	Only do that during Covid-19, haven't had any need to deal with it, in later times, we didn't go down that road, it was only, that time, just helped them out, no, we haven't continued it.

3.6.3. Below are keywords and codes relating to the interview with a supervisor 2.

Supervisor 2 Theme 1	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Covid-19 challenges	Not have enough people to work; afraid to work; in case; caught Covid-19; stock; get stuff in; no workers; stock low
Business strategies	No plan.
Challenges` Solution	No strategy. No solution.

Supervisor 2 Theme 2	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Management style	Free masks. They didn't do anything in that time. No training. Or cut hours.
Government Guidelines	The management; kind; helped; overall; employees; did by themselves.

Supervisor 2 Theme 3	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Quality of customer service/experience	Increased; everyone was fearful; more kind; try; make; more comfortable; customer didn't follow the guidelines;
Face to face interaction	Big challenges, people were rude
Business affects by Covid-19	Hard time.

Supervisor 2 Theme 4	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Business preparation to another wave	They are prepared.
Learnings from Covid-19	None.

Supervisor 2 Theme 5	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Marketing online	They should. But they didn't; go online.
Changes made because Covid-19	Phone order; deliver options.
Changes made and continue	No; only pandemic period.

3.6.4. Below are keywords and codes relating to the interview with an owner.

Owner 1 Theme 1	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Covid-19 challenges	Keep open, no online business, biggest, challenge
Business strategies	Marketing online
Challenges` Solution	Website

Owner 1 Theme 2	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Management style	Videos online, Facebook, collection, sell product
Government Guidelines	no mention

Owner 1 Theme 3	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Quality of customer service/experience	Decrease, because, Covid-19
Face to face interaction	Because, Covid-19, not, same, interaction
Business affects by Covid-19	Not, the same, amount, people, in the shop

Owner 1 Theme 4	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Business preparation to another wave	More ready, experienced, 2 years, Covid-19
Learnings from Covid-19	More organized, website, more knowledge

Owner 1 Theme 5	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Marketing online	The best idea, go online, future, probably all online, improvement
Changes made because Covid-19	Website, live, videos, deliver
Changes made and continue	Website, online marketing

3.7. Ethical Section

This research had maintained and considered all the ethical principles.

The primary research of this thesis contains a specific consent form for surveys and interviews.

The consent form contains details about this research to make clear the reason about the study.

The consent form consists of agreement to maintain the anonymity and privacy of the participant of this study.

In relation to the surveys, each voluntary participant agreed with the consent form before answering the online survey. For the interviews, the consent form was handed to them and agreed with the interviewees before scheduling the interview.

In relation to the interview as mentioned before, each interview was recorded with agreement of the interviewee and transcribed. After the transcription was sent to the person interviewed to check if all the information the participant said was truth transcribed. All the consent forms that were signed are in the Appendix section of this thesis.

To the second research obtained from books, articles, reports, Google Scholar, and journals, the ethical principles were maintained and been correctly referenced in this thesis.

Chapter 4

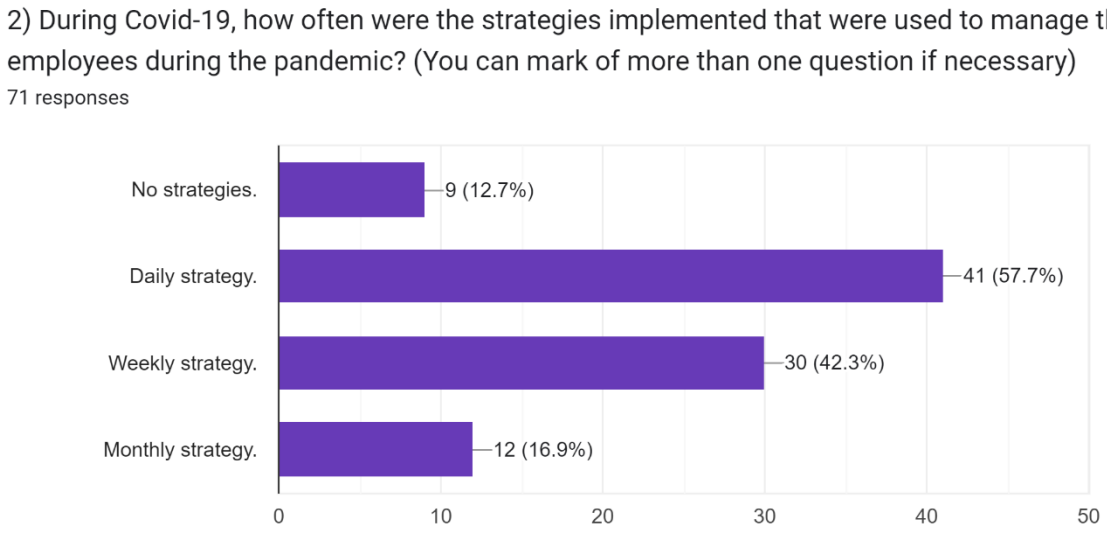
Findings and Discussion

4. Findings and Discussion

This chapter will be focused on the analysis of the data collected, it will be interpretated, compared, and discussed. The analysis collected by the surveys consisted of 21 questions, reaching 71 people agreed with the condition of the research, however because the question in the survey wasn't selected/marked as obligation in the beginning some people didn`t answer all the questions, some results will have a divergence.

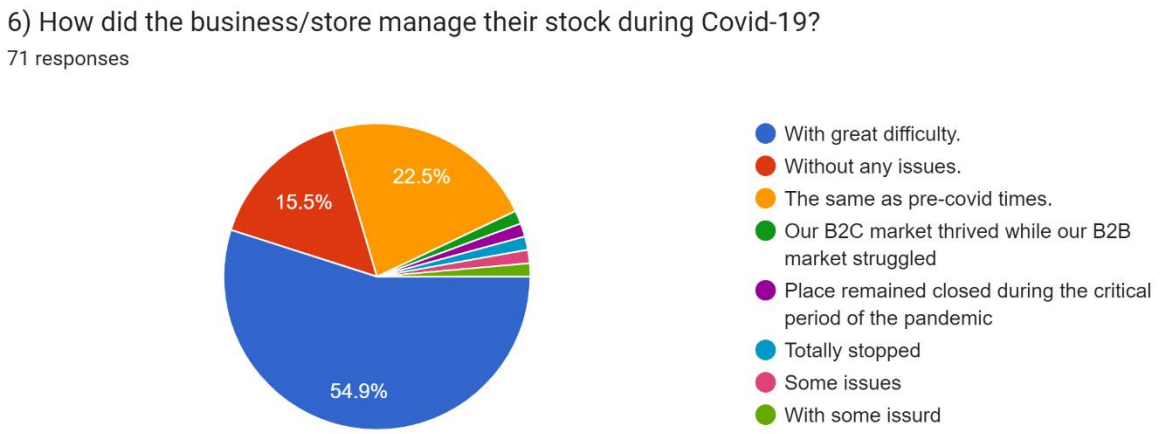
Follow the results from the survey research through Google Form graphic and statistics.

4.1. First Theme: Which strategies were used by the business in Ireland to keep the business making profit?



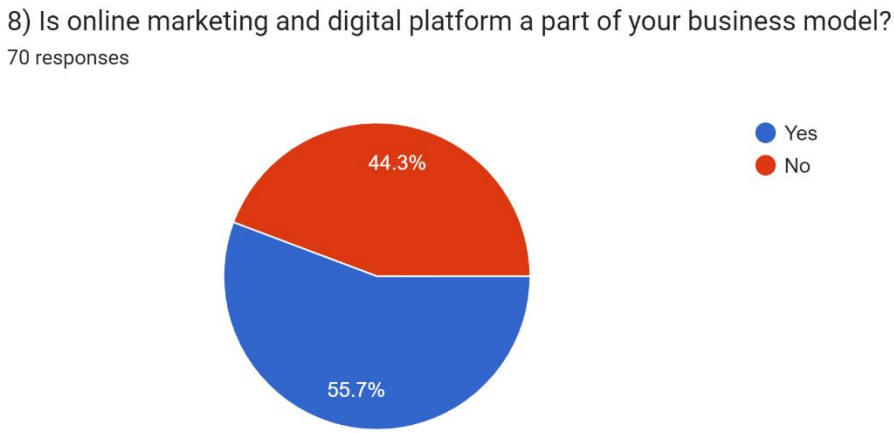
Picture 1: Business` affected by Covid-19 survey

In an overview most of the employees were manage daily, and that also had a good impact on the businesses, since the businesses is daily managed, dealing daily with opportunities and challenges during Covid-19.



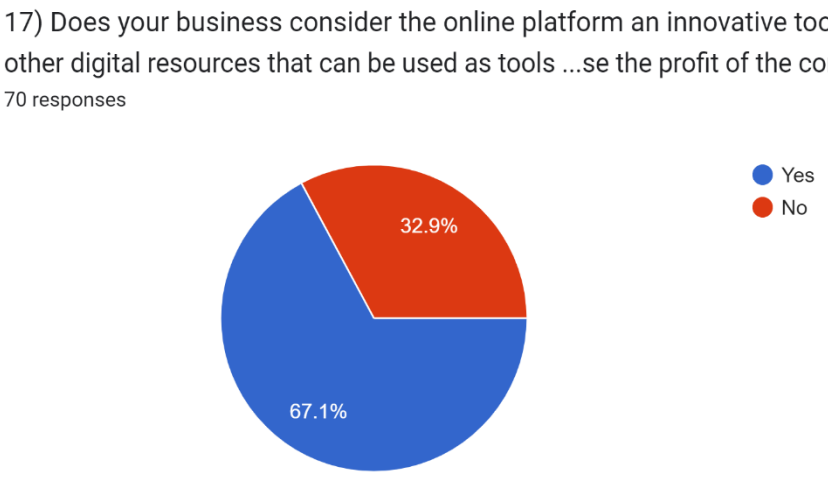
Picture 2: Business` affected by Covid-19 survey

That means 54,9% of the businesses had problems of suppliers to order and manage their stock during Covid-19.



Picture 3: Business` affected by Covid-19 survey

This means 55.7% of the businesses have online marketing and roughly half don't. The is very subjective for a business to have or not to have online business. However, during Covid-19 this could be or not be the additional profit necessary for the businesses.



Picture 4: Business` affected by Covid-19 survey

This means that 67,1% of the businesses must consider having online platform as very important tool to their business. As said before, consumers since Covid-19 had ventured into online shopping and more opportunities can be generated through online marketing.

Supervisor 1 Theme 1 – Which strategies were used by the business in Ireland to keep the business making profit? (Codes)	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Covid-19 challenges	as like everyone else was getting used, challenging times for everyone, like every other business, we just had to try our best to keep going
Business strategies	we all work together as a team; other ways, were very lucky
Challenges` Solution	Our staff looking after our staff, showed their strength

Picture 5: Interview with S01

The data collected from this interview means that during Covid-19, the management team during the challenging times didn`t have a strategy. From this data it is highlighted that the employees weren't managing well.

Supervisor 2 Theme 1 - Which strategies were used by the business in Ireland to keep the business making profit? (Codes)	Keywords in the interview (Codes)
Covid-19 challenges	Not have enough people to work; afraid to work; in case; caught Covid-19; stock; get stuff in; no workers; stock low
Business strategies	No plan.
Challenges` Solution	No strategy. No solution.

Picture 6: Interview with S02

The data collected from this interview means that during Covid-19, the management team during these challenging times didn`t have a strategy. During Covid-19 they didn't have enough people to work.

Owner 1 Theme 1 - Which strategies were used by the business in Ireland to keep the business making profit? (Codes)	Keywords in the interview (Codes)
Covid-19 challenges	Keep open, no online business, biggest, challenge
Business strategies	Marketing online
Challenges` Solution	Website

Picture 7: Interview O01

The data collected from this interview means that during Covid-19, the businesses had challenges to keep the business open. However, because of Covid-19 the businesses started online marketing.

From the data collected from the surveys and interviews it is highlighted that there are some similarities.

First, both agree that during Covid-19 businesses went through challenges. Second, businesses had difficulties managing their stock and the management didn't have a strategy to make profit.

Evaluating and comparing the data collected from the Quantitative and Qualitative research is important that they both agree with the Literature Review.

First, it was difficult for businesses to make profit and in the Literature Review it says that:

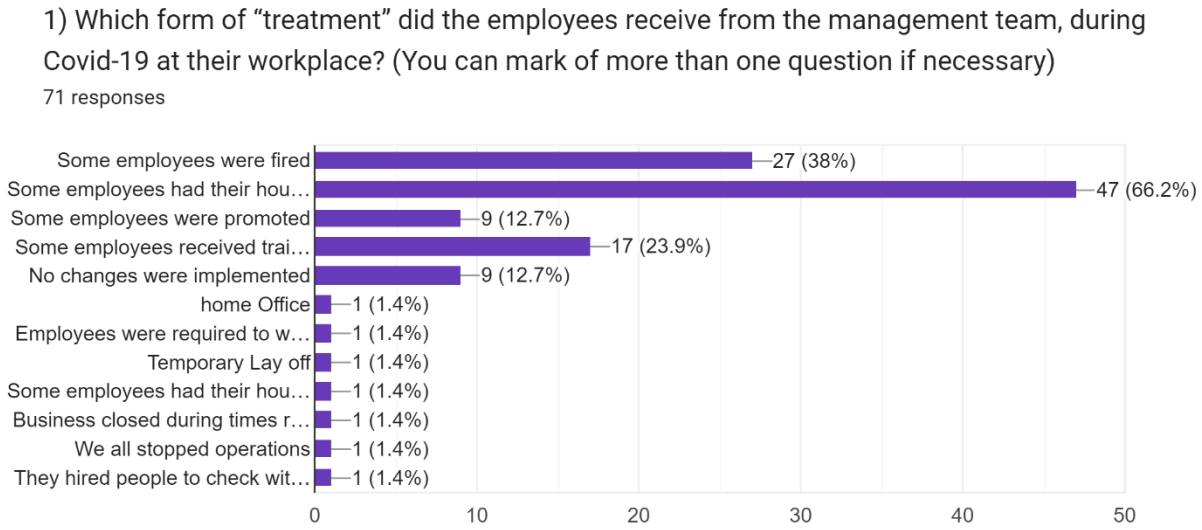
> "Businesses were challenged to maintain profit margins, since the global economic insecurity in relation to Covid-19". (Priya, 2020)

That shows that if was difficult before Covid-19 and means that during/after the pandemic the possibilities were much more difficult for businesses to survive.

Also, "For businesses to have success during this pandemic, they have to quickly respond to the change and have the skill to adapt to continue in the market." (Menon, 2020) From the Quantitative research 67,1% of the businesses consider the online platform innovative and that agrees with the Literature Review. Also, "The dynamic approach to the innovation of the businesses performance is a key focus point to deal with any problem". (Vivy Kristinae, 2020). However, only 55,7% of the businesses does have online marketing as part of their businesses, and 44,3% does not have it.

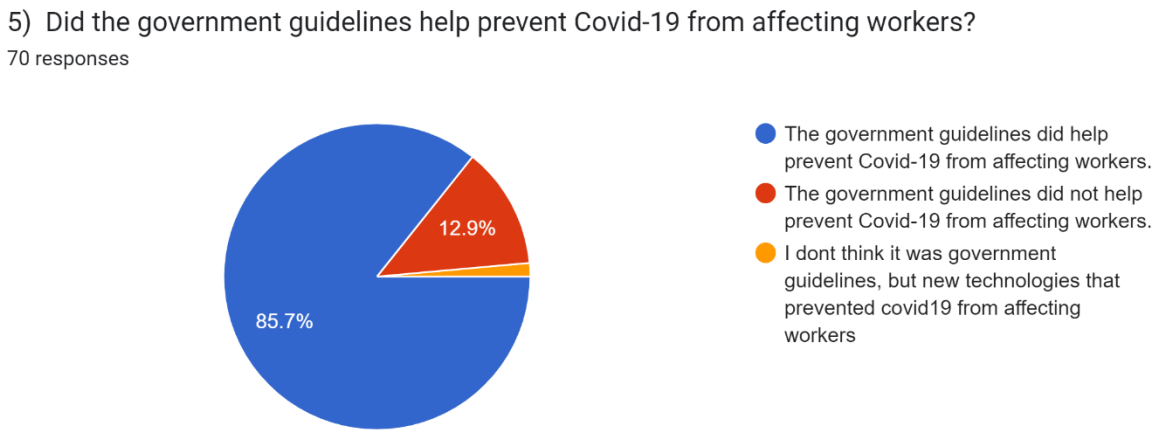
To conclude it is observed that a good part of the businesses had difficulties to have strategies during Covid-19. However, they had daily strategies, some started with online marketing, which was given to them new opportunities to make more profit.

4.2. Second Theme: How did the Covid-19 guidelines from the government affect employees? And which strategies were used by the management team to help their employees go through that at the same time making money?



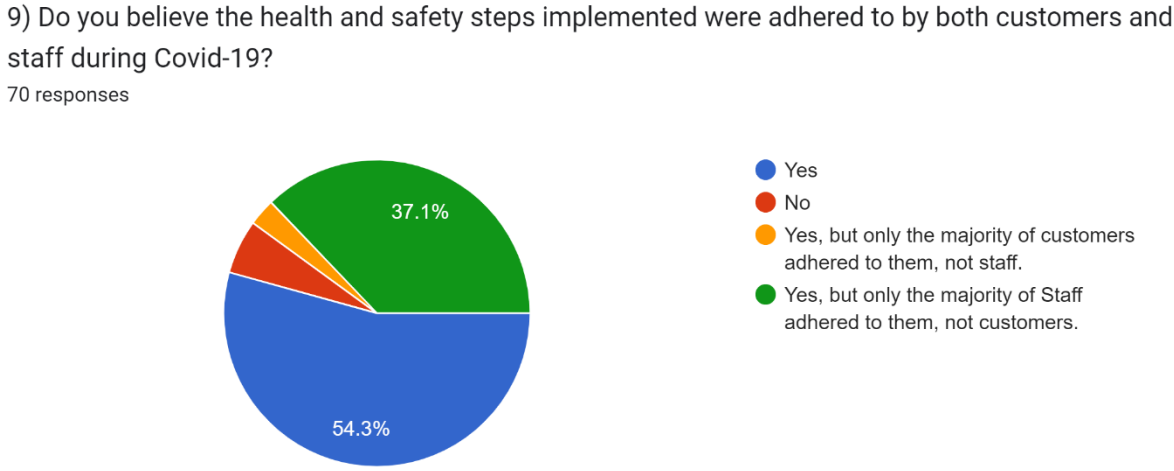
Picture 8: Business` affected by Covid-19 survey

This means businesses had to fire their employees to cut costs to improve their revenue during Covid-19. However, the management also promoted and gave appreciation to their employees during this hard time.



Picture 9: Business` affected by Covid-19 survey

This means businesses had support from the government from this time and the employees were working in the front line during the pandemic.



Picture 10: Business` affected by Covid-19 survey

This means the retail businesses managed their employees to follow the rules implemented by the government. However, most of the results show that businesses couldn't manage their customers.

Customer 1 Theme 2 - How did the Covid-19 guidelines from the government affect employees? And which strategies were used by the management team to help their employees go through that at the same time making money? (Codes)	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
General costumer affects	Fear buying, kept buying out, panic buying.
Government Guidelines	Very difficult, social distance, other consumers not keeping guidelines, necessary rules.
Online shop	people venture online, people went to online shopping, easier, quicker.
NVIVO Theme Traumatic shopping experience because Covid-19	A lot to consider, take a toll on me, stress out, afraid to go to the shop, afraid to catch Covid-19, Painful.

Picture 11: Interview with C

The data collected from the interview means that during Covid-19, the customers were afraid and scared to go shopping. The guidelines from the government didn't help the customers environment, as it was noticed from the data that other customers didn't follow the guidelines. The online shopping was the best option to escape from this period of pandemic.

Supervisor 1 Theme 2 - How did the Covid-19 guidelines from the government affect employees? And which strategies were used by the management team to help their employees go through that at the same time making money? (Codes)	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Management style	Everyone was really cooperative, hopefully, we did a good job, keeping everyone safe and guidelines
Government Guidelines	we didn't have any problems, asking people to wear masks, we had all that signs up, we had all the guidelines of staff and customers,

Picture 12: Interview with S01

The data collected from this interview means that during Covid-19, the management worked together to have good results and managed to keep everyone safe following the guidelines.

Supervisor 2 Theme 2 - How did the Covid-19 guidelines from the government affect employees? And which strategies were used by the management team to help their employees go through that at the same time making money? (Codes)	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Management style	Free masks. They didn't do anything in that time. No training. Or cut hours.
Government Guidelines	The management; kind; helped; overall; employees; did by themselves.

Picture 13: Interview with S02

The data collected from this interview means that during Covid-19, the management didn't have any strategies related to their employees. However, the management failed to give full support to their employees, instead they helped each other rather than getting help from the management team.

Owner 1 Theme 2 - How did the Covid-19 guidelines from the government affect employees? And which strategies were used by the management team to help their employees go through that at the same time making money? (Codes)	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Management style	Videos online, Facebook, collection, sell product
Government Guidelines	no mention

Picture 14: Interview O01

The data collected from this interview means that during Covid-19, businesses did have strategies related to their business matter, such as marketing on social media.

From the Quantitative and Qualitative research, it is shown that there are some similarities.

Firstly, only most of the Staff adhered to Covid-19 guidelines. Secondly, the rules helped the employee from Covid-19.

Evaluating and comparing the data collected from the surveys and interviews it shows that they both agreed with the Literature Review.

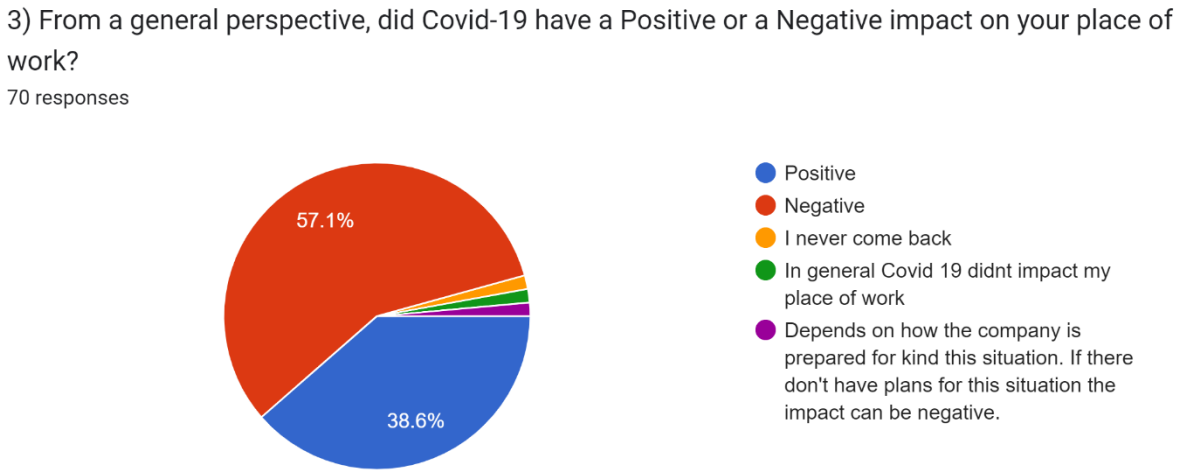
Firstly, in this aspect of the businesses, it helped to manage their store and to follow the Covid-19 guidelines from the government, in the Literature Review says that:

> "The 2m distance and the global lockdown made from the small to the well-known companies faced effects which had companies re-look at their management plan."
>
> (Priya, 2020)

Also, the primary research agrees with the secondary research in the aspect of 66,2% of the employees that had their hours cut; 38% of the employees were fired, the Literature Review says that “The number of workers which had been affected by the pandemic it is 57%, which is 34% working from home and 23% which had their work hours affected”. (Mangan, 2020) and in the Literature also says that “The employees had lost their jobs because of the closure of the business or had been fired due to the pandemic”. (Slaughter, 2020)

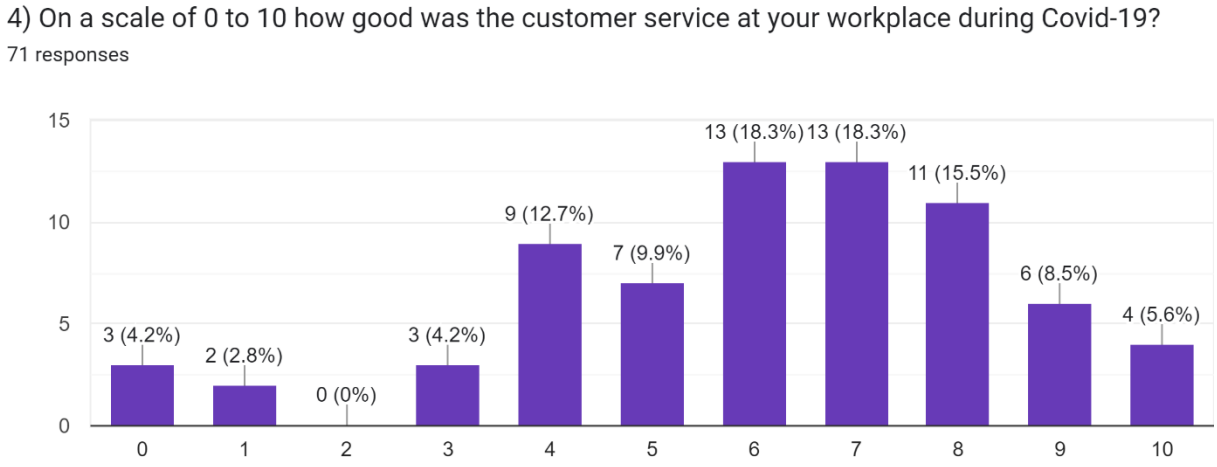
To conclude, it is observed that a good number of sections of the businesses had difficulties during Covid-19 and because of that they had to fire and cut hours from their employees. Other businesses improved on their advertisement on social media.

4.3. Third Theme: Did the quality of customer service increase or decrease during the global pandemic? How was it managed? Which alternatives was used? And can it be improved and how?



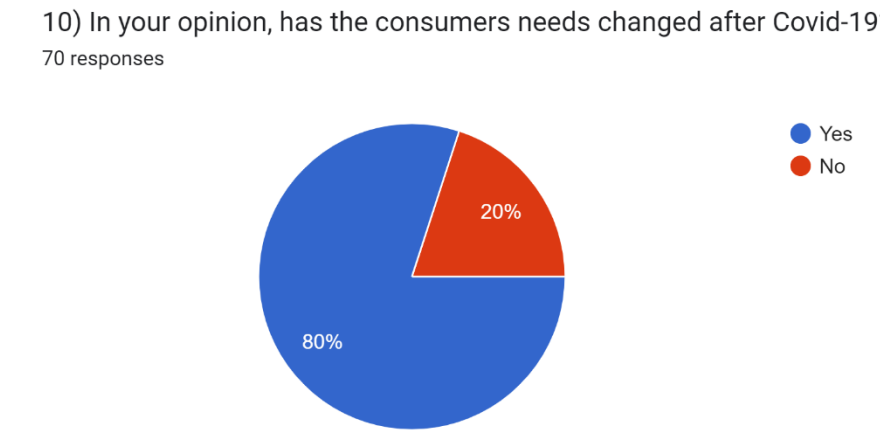
Picture 15: Business` affected by Covid-19 survey

That means businesses had had a negative impact because Covid-19.



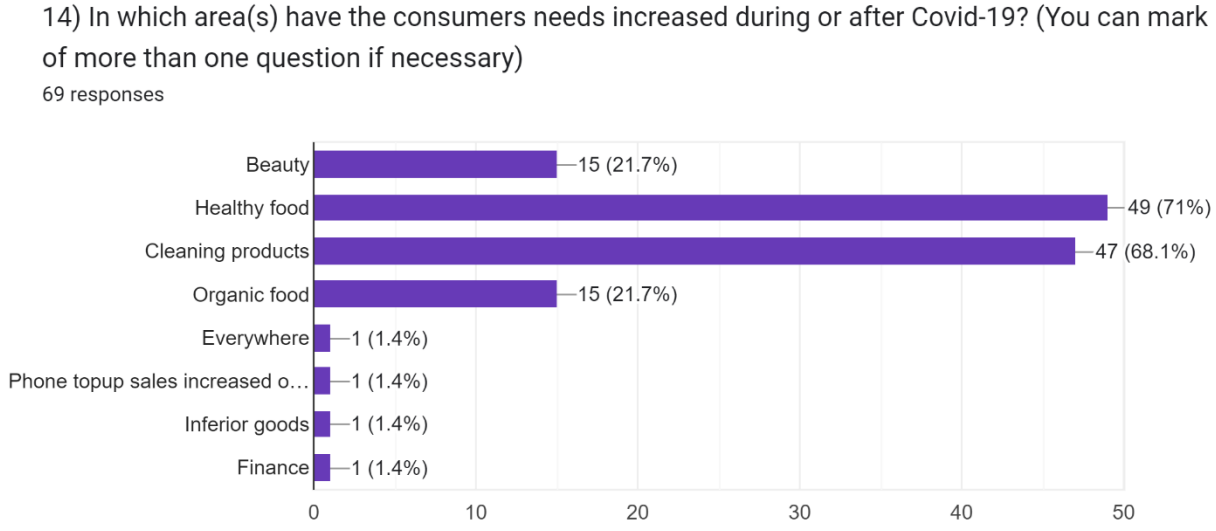
Picture 16: Business`s affected by Covid-19 survey

That means the customer service didn’t have a good the performance during Covid-19.



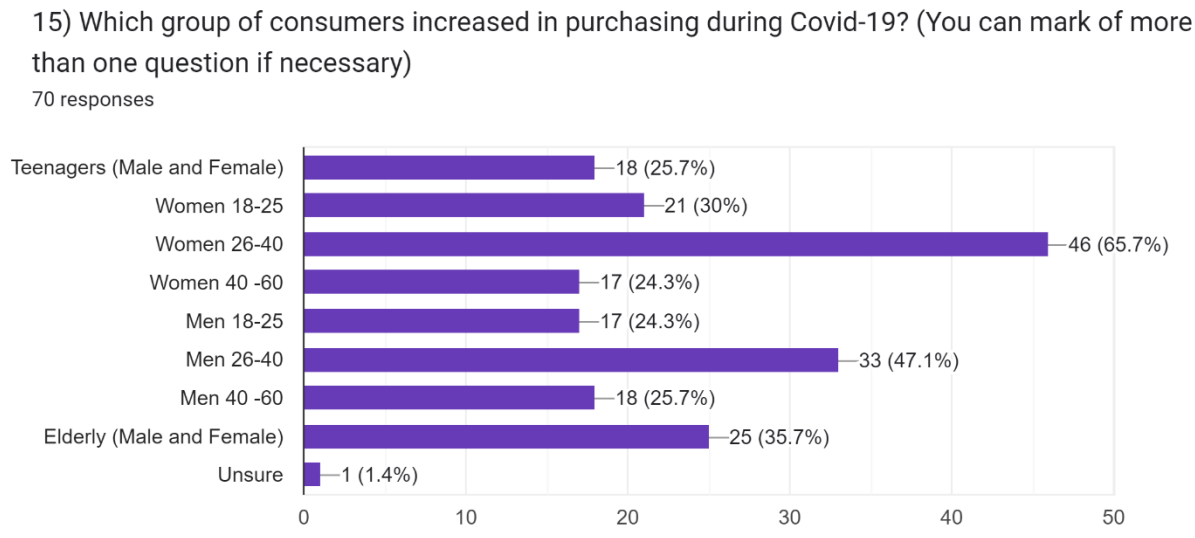
Picture 17: Business`s affected by Covid-19 survey

That means during Covid-19 customer has changed their needs.



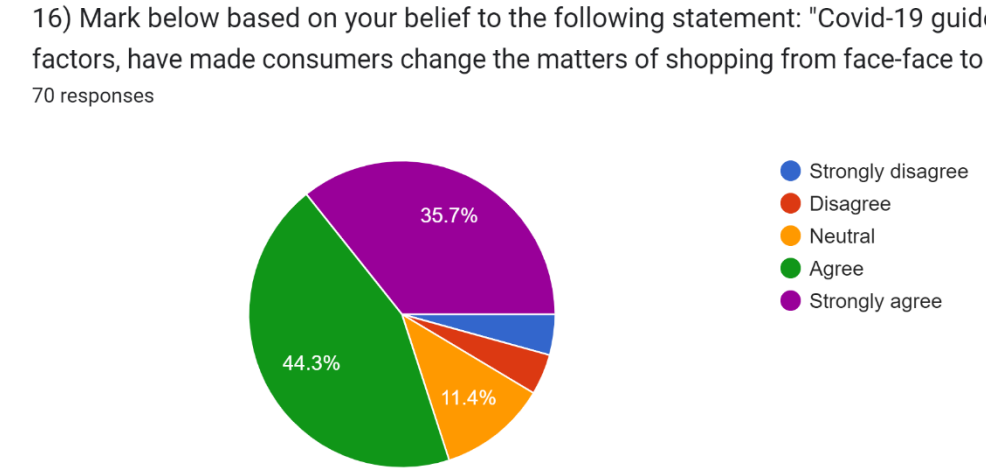
Picture 18: Business`s affected by Covid-19 survey

That means during Covid-19 the sales of healthy food products increased in retail businesses.



Picture 19: Business`s affected by Covid-19 survey

That means the target is that women around 26-40 had been purchasing more during Covid-19.



Picture 20: Business` affected by Covid-19 survey

This means from the majority of the results consumers has to change their matter to shopping face-to-face to online shopping during the pandemic period.

Customer 1 Theme 3 - Did the quality of customer service increase or decrease during the global pandemic? How was it managed? Which alternatives was used? And can it be improved and how?	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Quality of customer service/experience	Similar, but less human contact, not getting answers to their issues, they try to maintain, customer service quality, didn't have the tools necessary, to solve problems, awful time awful
Business affects by Covid-19	Covid-19 impacted so many businesses, they try to maintain, same customer service, quality
NVIVO Theme Lack of support desk/online/phone/social media	Technical help desks, IP support, were left on the phone, couldn't solve them, they couldn't get access to the systems, they could help you, completely lost in limbo

Picture 21: Interview with C

The data collected from this interview means that during Covid-19, it shows that the customer suffered from a lack of business due to not being able to solve problems and not having the necessary tools. Also, the customer service decreased, and businesses tried to maintain the same customer service quality.

The period of Covid-19 was awful time for the customers.

Supervisor 1 Theme 3 - Did the quality of customer service increase or decrease during the global pandemic? How was it managed? Which alternatives was used? And can it be improved and how?	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Quality of customer service/experience	I would say decrease or increase, respect given them and minded, them the qualitative, they needed, probably, more conscious, during that time, customer server, hard time, minded them, as well, the customers.
Face to face interaction	it was hard, for everyone, like customers, staff, would be harder.
Business affects by Covid-19	hard time
NVIVO Theme Staff support and experience	Really, pull around stops, that time, they had to mind, themselves, had families, mind, their family, it was hard, for everyone.

Picture 22: Interview with S01

The data collected from this interview means that during Covid-19, the management tried to maintain the same quality of customer service as before the pandemic. However, they had difficulties to maintain the same interactions as in the retail businesses the interaction with customers is essential. The management admitted the pandemic was a hard time.

Supervisor 2 Theme 3 - Did the quality of customer service increase or decrease during the global pandemic? How was it managed? Which alternatives was used? And can it be improved and how?	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Quality of customer service/experience	Increased; everyone was fearful; more kind; try; make; more comfortable; customer didn't follow the guidelines;
Face to face interaction	Big challenges, people were rude
Business affects by Covid-19	Hard time.

Picture 23: Interview S02

The data collected from this interview means that during Covid-19, the management tried to maintain the same quality of customer service as before the pandemic. The management admitted this was a big challenge in the period of Covid-19.

Owner 1 Theme 3 - Did the quality of customer service increase or decrease during the global pandemic? How was it managed? Which alternatives was used? And can it be improved and how?	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Quality of customer service/experience	Decrease, because, Covid-19
Face to face interaction	Because, Covid-19, not, same, interaction
Business affects by Covid-19	Not, the same, amount, people, in the shop

Picture 24: Interview with O01

The data collected from this interview means that during-Covid-19, the customer service decreased, and the number of customers reduced because of Covid-19.

From the Quantitative and Qualitative research, it is noticed that there are some similarities.

First, is that the pandemic had a negative impact on the businesses, which affected the quality of customer service and their experience.

Second, the negative impact affected the change of customer needs.

Evaluating and comparing the data collected from the surveys and interviews, it is noticed that they both agreed with the Literature Review.

First in the aspect of the healthy food products increased during Covid-19, and in the Literature, Review says that:

> "The consumer needs increase in relation to healthy food, where women were more worried about getting infected, than men. The elderly population had more fear with Covid-19, compared to younger people, so they avoided shopping to mitigate their risk". (Fazel Hesham, 2021)

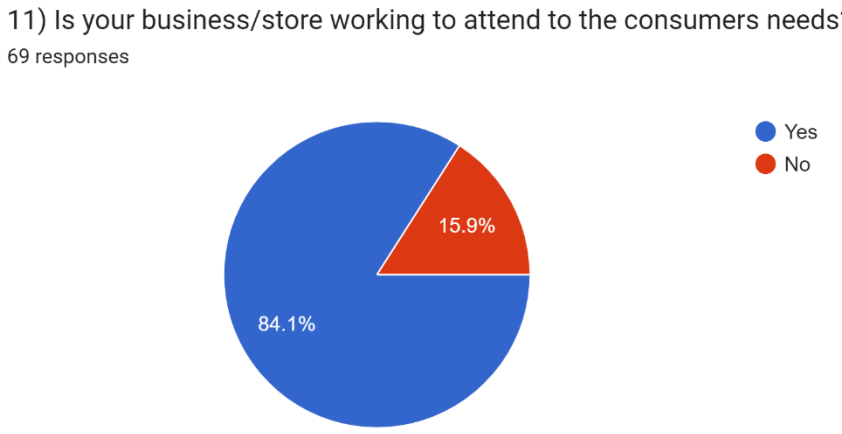
Also, this shows that the majority of the sales were targeted at women around 26-40 years old and 35,7% of elderly (male and female) during the period of the pandemic.

Second agreement is that the businesses didn't have the necessary tools to address their consumers, and in the Literature Review it says it is necessary for businesses to have "Innovative and caring tools is there to address the consumers' needs. The innovations need to be stronger to tie the era of Covid-19." (Rachel Diebner, 2020)

In addition, the Quantitative data agreed with the Literature Review in the fact that 44,3% agree that consumers have changed their matters of shopping from face-to-face to online shopping and in the Literature Review it states that "The method to do shopping `face-to-face` has been reduced, as nowadays consumers had been choosing online shopping instead. However, consumers still need to touch and see the products to make their final purchase". (Sayyida Sayyida, 2021) Also, 80% agreed that consumer needs have changed after Covid-19

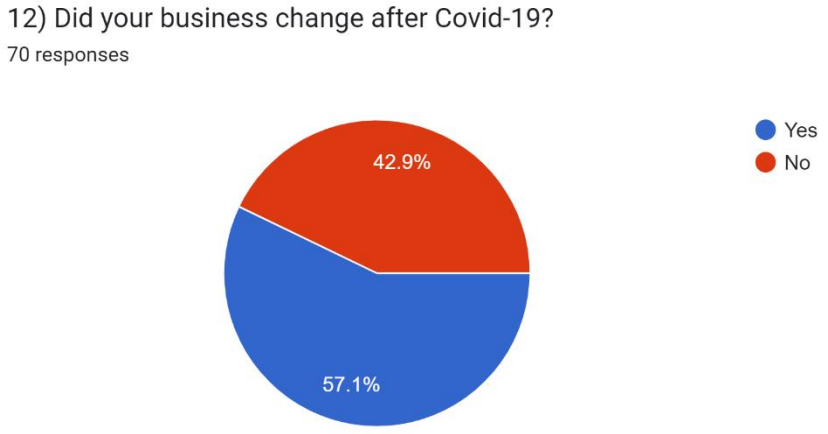
In conclusion, it's observed that the quality of consumer service didn't perform well, even businesses having extra care with their customers had gaps that the management couldn't solve. The online shopping is the first option for the customers, because Covid-19 had a negative impact on businesses face-to-face aspect.

4.4. Fourth Theme: Considering the changes implemented by business in Ireland during Covid-19, what changes will continue throughout for businesses to ensure wellbeing for both staff and customers?



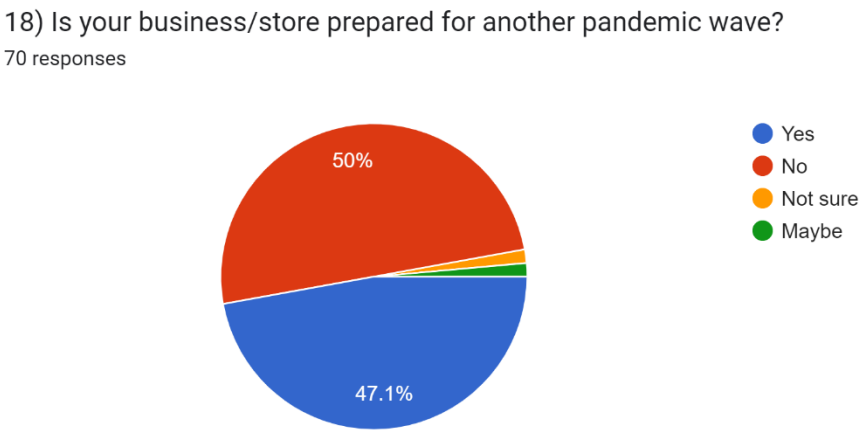
Picture 25: Business`s affected by Covid-19 survey

That means businesses during/after Covid-19 are working to improve and attend to consumer's needs.



Picture 26: Business` affected by Covid-19 survey

That means businesses were pushed to change and improve their performance to continue in the market.



Picture 27: Business` affected by Covid-19 survey

That shows that businesses were not prepared for another wave.

Customer 1 Theme 4 - Considering the changes implemented by businesses in Ireland during Covid-19, what changes will continue throughout for businesses to ensure wellbeing for both staff and customers?	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Business preparation to another wave	Following the company guidelines, we're stabilized, people are aware, now better adapted.
Learnings from Covid-19	Take care of the customers, take care of themselves, what happened, what they needed to do, apply
NVIVO Theme Government conscious	Understanding the approach, people need, or don't need.

Picture 28: Interview with C

The data collected from this interview shows businesses are prepared for another wave.

The quality of customer service has decreased. To ensure the wellbeing of customers, businesses must improve their customer service performance.

Supervisor 1 Theme 4 - Considering the changes implemented by business in Ireland during Covid-19, what changes will continue throughout for businesses to ensure wellbeing for both staff and customers? (Codes)	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Business preparation to another wave	won't be as tolerant, so much, past few years, we would be able, to get through, again, like, we did the last time
Learnings from Covid-19	it will be prepared, if you have good staff, and, you have good management, know the guidelines, followed the guidelines, it should be ok.

Picture 29: Interview with S01

The data collected from this interview means businesses are prepared for another wave. However, to ensure wellbeing of their employees, businesses must improve management performances.

Supervisor 2 Theme 4 - Considering the changes implemented by business in Ireland during Covid-19, what changes will continue throughout for businesses to ensure wellbeing for both staff and customers? (Codes)	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Business preparation to another wave	They are prepared.
Learnings from Covid-19	None.

Picture 30: Interview with S02

The data collected from this interview means businesses are prepared for another wave. However, to ensure performance, businesses must have strategies to improve their businesses performance and prevent any new crisis.

Owner 1 Theme 4 - Considering the changes implemented by businesses in Ireland during Covid-19, what changes will continue throughout for businesses to ensure wellbeing for both staff and customers?	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Business preparation to another wave	More ready, experienced, 2 years, Covid-19
Learnings from Covid-19	More organized, website, more knowledge

Picture 31: Interview with O01

The data collected from this interview means businesses are ready, experienced, knowledgeable and are more organized.

From the Quantitative and Qualitative data, it shows they have one similarity.

The similarity is that 47,1% agree the that businesses are prepared for another wave. However, in the matter of strategy, businesses must increase it to ensure the customers wellbeing.

Evaluating and comparing the data collected from the Quantitative surveys and Qualitative interviews shows that they both agreed with the Literature Review.

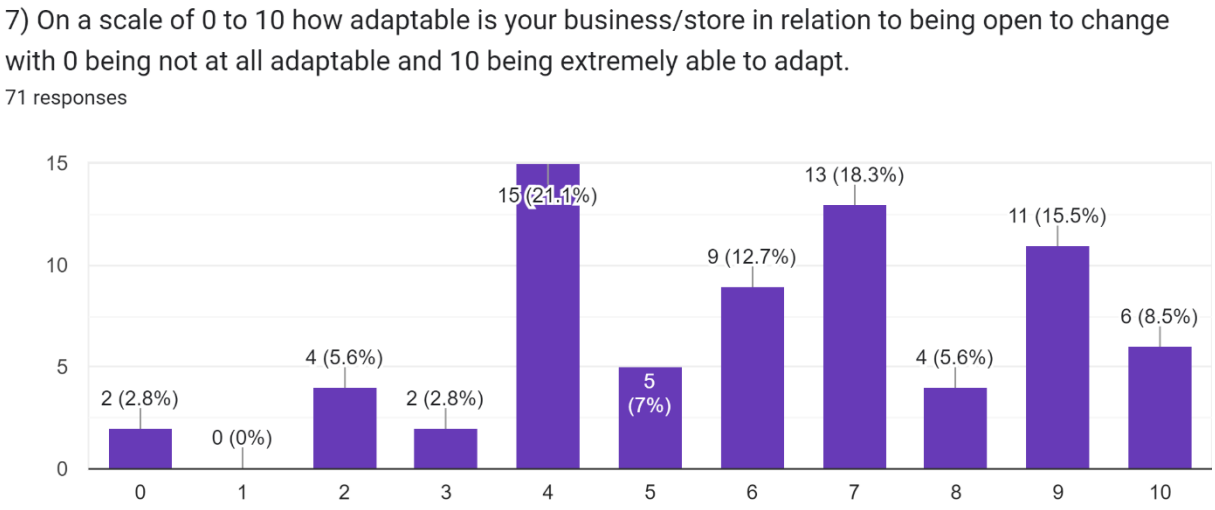
First in the aspect of 80%, it is agreed that consumers needs have changed after Covid-19 and can be improved with the advice in the Literature Review, where it states:

> "The Covid-19 has devastated businesses around the world and impacted their economy, but through the improvement of active strategies and artificial intelligence, businesses can have success". (Ehiorobo, 2020)

The Literature Review agrees with the primary research where it says that “The best strategy for retail businesses is selling their products in two ways, in physical and online platforms, this will help in different ways and increase the retailer`s merchandise.” (P.R.S. Sarma, 2021) And in the Quantitative, where says that 84,1% of employees and managers agreed businesses are working to attend the consumer needs.

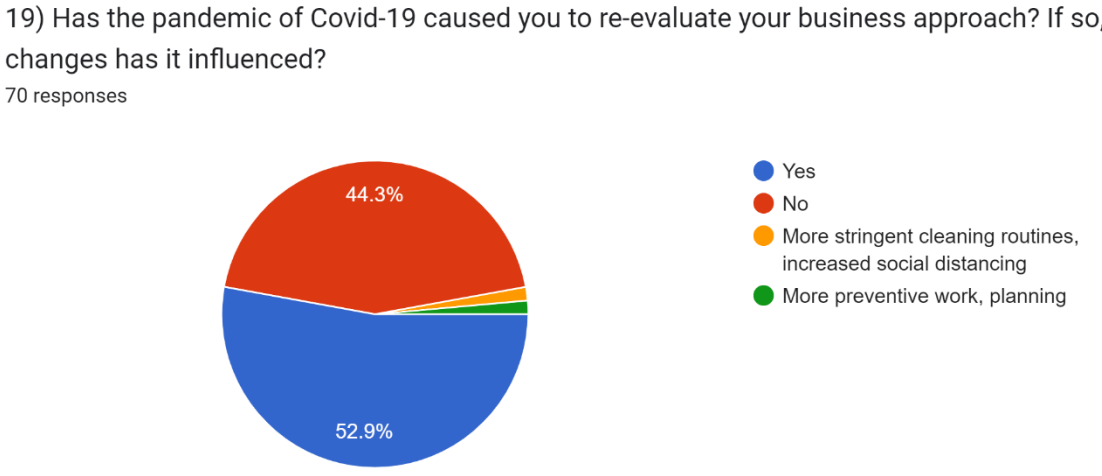
In conclusion, the data shows businesses learned their lessons during Covid-19 and are trying to improve their performance and implement their changes/lessons made to ensure wellbeing of their employees and consumers. However, from the overall data collected, businesses aren’t prepared for another wave.

4.5. Fifth Theme: What was the advantages and disadvantages of the changes to adapt the period of Covid-19? Lessons learned from Covid-19.



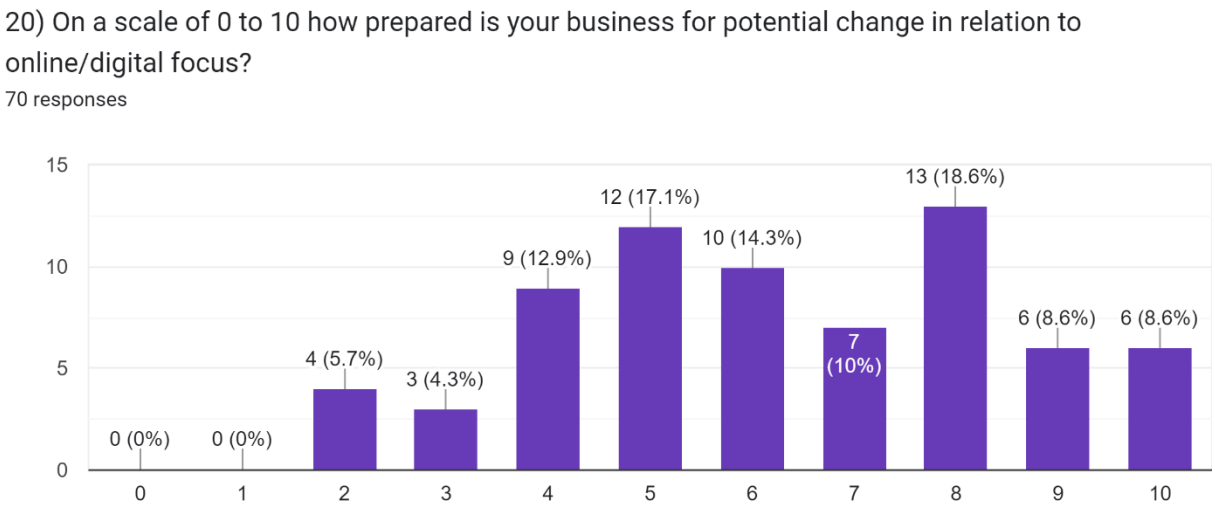
Picture 32: Business` affected by Covid-19 survey

That means businesses with 21,1% aren't adaptable to being open to change.



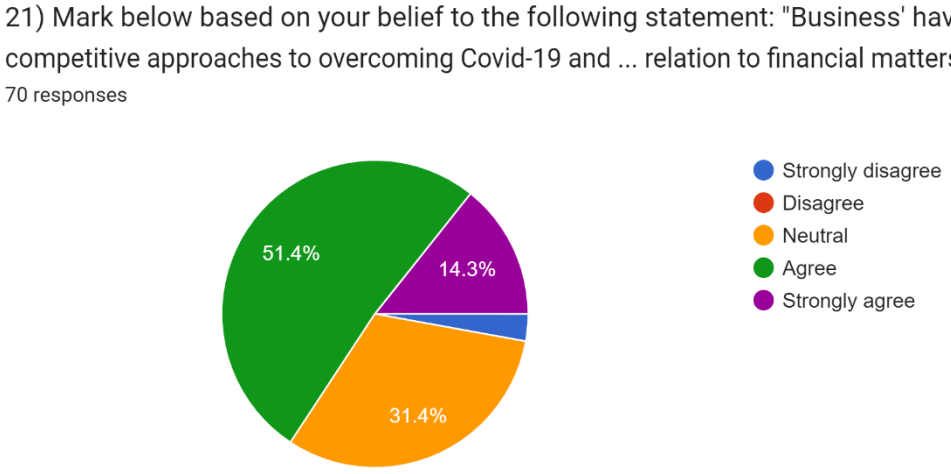
Picture 33: Business` affected by Covid-19 survey

This highlights that businesses had re-evaluated their companies.



Picture 34: Business` affected by Covid-19 survey

This shows that businesses are prepared for a potential change in relation to online/digital focus.



Picture 35: Business` affected by Covid-19 survey

This shows the majority of the businesses are creating strategies and approaches to survive during/after Covid-19.

Customer 1 Theme 5 - What was the advantages and disadvantages of the changes to adapt the period of Covid-19? Lessons learned from Covid-19. (Codes)	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Covid-19 positive advantages	only buying essential, focus on, spending less, paying attention,
Covid-19 negative disadvantages	Awful time, anxiety to shop, terrified,
Customer experience	Changed the way people have shopped, stress about a lot, worry shopping, going out
Lessons learned from Covid-19	It's made it better and worse for me, spray at the hand sanitizer, it's not even necessity, but it's just compulsion, still, keeping your distance,

Picture 36: Interview with C

The data shows the customer had disadvantages in relation to an unpleasant time during the pandemic. The advantages are that customers are buying less – that means they are expending less money, because they are aware of consumption. The lessons learned is that customers will continue to maintain the “sanitation” and the necessary guidelines because it’s part of their lives.

Supervisor 1 Theme 5 - What was the advantages and disadvantages of the changes to adapt the period of Covid-19? Lessons learned from Covid-19. (Codes)	**Keywords in the interview (Codes)**
Marketing online	No, we didn't do it, we didn't do any online,
Changes made because Covid-19	Deliveries, for a few locals, they didn't want, to coming, to the shop, just for a few, locals, they were afraid, to come out, they didn't want to come to places, that were crowded, only do that during Covid-19, we had some loyalty customer, with us, a while, lots of them, elderly, didn`t want to come out, just helped them out.
Changes made and continue	Only do that during Covid-19, haven't had any need to deal with it, in later times, we didn't go down that road, it was only, that time, just helped them out, no, we haven't continued it.

Picture 37: Interview with S01

In relation to the advantages, they implemented delivery to customers during Covid-19. The disadvantages were in relation online marketing. The lessons learned is that they had implemented changes. However, they don’t see them as mandatory to continue in their business.

Supervisor 2 Theme 5 - What was the advantages and disadvantages of the changes to adapt the period of Covid-19? Lessons learned from Covid-19. (Codes)	Keywords in the interview (Codes)
Marketing online	They should. But they didn't; go online.
Changes made because Covid-19	Phone order; deliver options.
Changes made and continue	No; only pandemic period.

Picture 38: Interview with S02

In relation to the advantages, they implemented delivery to customers during Covid-19. The disadvantages are that they didn`t implement online marketing. The lessons learned shows they had implemented changes. However, they don't see the changes as important to continue in their business.

Owner 1 Theme 5 - What was the advantages and disadvantages of the changes to adapt the period of Covid-19? Lessons learned from Covid-19.	Keywords in the interview (Codes)
Marketing online	The best idea, go online, future, probably all online, improvement
Changes made because Covid-19	Website, live, videos, deliver
Changes made and continue	Website, online marketing

Picture 39: Interview O01

In relation to the advantages, they had implemented a website, deliveries, videos, and online marketing. The lessons learned shows they will continue with online marketing.

From the Quantitative and Qualitative it shows that they have similarities.

The similarity is that 51,4% of business' have been creating competitive approaches to overcoming Covid-19 and adding value, considering the effects of making decisions and improvements in relation to financial matters of the company. Businesses implemented new changes, adding value and loyalty to their customers.

The second similarity is that 57,1% that Covid-19 had a negative impact in the workplace, that also reflects in the customer environment. In the Qualitative research, it shows that the pandemic period was an unpleasant time.

Evaluating and comparing the data collected from the Quantitative and Qualitative is noticed that they both agree with the Literature Review.

First in the aspect of the primary research agreed that 52,9% of businesses had to re-evaluate their approach. The Literature Review agrees and says:

> "Businesses around the world had/have to change the way they work to online businesses to attend to the new behaviours of consumers which had changed during the pandemic." (Adebisi, 2022)

The primary research agrees that businesses had implemented changes to attend customers during the pandemic, however, they don't want to continue it. The Literature agrees and states that "Businesses have been creating competitive approaches to overcoming Covid-19 and to add value, considering the effects of making decisions and improvements in relation to financial matters of the company." (Nassar, 2021) In addition, the primary research agreed where it says that, 51,4% of the business' created competitive approaches to overcoming Covid-19 and to add value, considering the effects of making decisions and improvements in relation to company financial matters.

However, in relation to marketing online the primary research said their business didn't implement it and this part doesn't agree with the Literature Review where it says that "Businesses built processes in relation to their supply chain during the pandemic, migrating to digital division networks. Improvement in consumer services, adding online promotion, cross-selling and supporting consumers." (Jun Kang, 2020)

To conclude, businesses had disadvantages in relation to implementing marketing online to improve the brand name and sales. However, they had advantages implementing some changes in relation to websites and increasing loyalty. The lessons learned is that businesses must improve their internal approaches and online marketing to succeed.

4.6. NVIVO

On the first theme I have found a NIVIVO which was generated through an interview, related to "Traumatic shopping experience because Covid-19".

The interviewee brings insights of their experience. He stated, "A lot to consider, take a toll on me, stress out, afraid to go to the shop, afraid to catch Covid-19, Painful." The data relates to the traumatic experience of the customers during Covid-19.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

5. Conclusion

In Conclusion with this all the research conducted about “How Covid-19 affects retail businesses in Ireland” it concludes that businesses had difficulties making profit. Businesses only used daily tactics; in relation to marketing online, only 55,7% have a digital platform and 44,3% don’t. However, their management performance was lower with no specific plan, and they have difficulties getting stock from their suppliers.

From the data 66,2% of employees had hours cut and 38% were fired, these decisions were made by businesses to survive the pandemic. Businesses managed the government guidelines but had gaps to fully support their employees and consumer’s needs.

Businesses must assist their customer’s issue. Though the businesses tried to give extra care it wasn’t enough as customers were still unhappy with the service. Customers’ needs have changed nowadays as 44,3% have the online shop rather than the first option of face-to-face.

The changes implemented in this sample for the big retail businesses in Rathdrum was to attend to their customers and complete “deliveries” for customers, but it was discontinued as it was unnecessary. However, a small retail business in the same region implemented a website, delivered to customers, and posted videos of their products to attend their customers – though their doors were closed, they continue improving. Businesses can gain customers and loyalty by investing in the online platform, which can advertise their store and their products.

To conclude “How Covid-19 affects retail businesses in Ireland”, from the research, it shows 50% of businesses aren’t fully prepared for another crisis. Businesses survived from Covid-19 with a little percentage of “luck”. The strategies were nearly zero during the pandemic.

5.1. Limitations

The Limitations was to acquire more information from the management of my sample about the strategies used in big retail business during Covid-19.

The quantitative research showed much more information and better results than the interviews.

Also, to scheduled interviews with my sample was difficult to schedule. I planned to interview around 10 people from my sample, but the limitation of words and time frame was too short. So, only 4 interviews were made.

The limit of words prevented me from developing and showing more information in the research.

5.2. Recommendation

To improve the customer service, businesses should invest in solving customers' requests. The customers' needs have changed to 80% from the research, which means customers don't want the same style of management or service.

Another recommendation for the improvement of businesses is that they should invest in an online platform, as 44,3% of the customers use online shopping as their first option, rather than face-to-face. Also, it shows the increase of specific products is 68,1% in relation to cleaning products; 21,7% in relation to beauty products and target of gender with 65,7% for women around 26-40 years old that has increased during Covid-19 – that data can help businesses to evaluate their marketing and to increase their sales.

The changes implemented by the sample, could continue to bring opportunities to the business, expand their sales and gain diversity – as this is what happened with the owner of the small retail, which launched their small retail website, and improved their performance.

Businesses must evaluate their internal approach and improve it to succeed in the marketplace.