

UK Retail Industry Digital Marketing Beyond Lockdown: Post COVID

Waqar Yasir¹

Muhammad Abdullah Tariq²

How to cite this article:

Yasir, W., Tariq, M. A. (2025). UK retail industry digital marketing beyond lockdown: Post COVID. *Journal of Excellence in Management Sciences*, 4(1), 71–96.

Received: 8 September 2024 / Accepted: 27 Jan 2024 / Published online: 5 March 2025

Abstract

COVID-19 has left an allover influence on the online marketing techniques and the buying patterns in the UK retail industry. This research examines the swift shift of digital marketing techniques, the unprecedented shift in consumers' purchase behavior, and other general and specific temporal, perpetual, and contingent consequences and possibilities throughout and coming out of the pandemic. Therefore, six professionals from the digital marketing field and six consumers participated in the qualitative interviews; main themes were then developed and discussed. The study yields indicate that digital marketing specialists quickly responded to the situation by shifting to utilizing online media and other digital technologies, including virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and chatbots to communicate with buyers. The need to proceed with its implementation as soon as possible, and the use of key performance indicators that define its effectiveness were the significant elements of this adaptation. Pandemic situations like lock downs and social distancing led to a drastic change in the consumer behavior in terms of adopting the online platform for shopping along with increased interaction with brands through digital means. This relates with the following major digital marketing trends that affected the consumer perception and loyalty; The innovative marketing communication strategies that connotes a distinctive experience and that delivered distinguishing content appealed to consumers greatly. Long-term effects include the understanding that most of the modifications made throughout the pandemic era like the shift from in-person events to virtual ones and development of more profound social media presence will remain relevant after the pandemic. The crisis affected the innovation of the marketing departments where many news digital advancements to suit the marketing needs arose from the pandemic. Consequently, the future role of digital marketing is considered to remain highly important, with a focus on preserving the company's sound digital profile. Thus, to the academic community and practitioners, this study adds knowledge to how the pandemic impacted the evolution of digital marketing strategies. The result proves that the digital marketing profession is quite robust and has been able to overcome the unprecedented events and will have more space and potentialities to advance in the future.

¹School of Management, University of BRADFORD, United Kingdom

Corresponding Author: w.yasir@bradford.ac.uk

²Institute of Business Management & Administrative Sciences, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Bahawalpur, Pakistan



Keywords: Retail Industry, Digital Marketing, Lockdown, COVID, Technology, Pandemics, Marketing Techniques.

1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic can be considered one of the most important external shocks faced by the global retail industry in modern history that has dramatically changed the way companies interact with the market, embrace technology, and their relations with the consumer. The pandemic pushed an already digitalizing retail, rooted in the United Kingdom with retail playing a significant role in the labor market and economic activity, to the point that digital marketing is no longer viewed as an auxiliary supportive tool, but as a strategic asset (Hewett, [2021](#); Rose et al., [2023](#); Pantano et al., [2020](#)). Whereas the pace of digitalisation had been gradually accelerating before the pandemic, the COVID-19 caused a drastic rise in the rate and extent of adoption since it compelled retailers to introduce digital instruments in a state of supreme uncertainty and stress on time.

The shift of the physical retailing towards the online one was more of a gradual and a demand-based approach before the pandemic. The consumer expectations were slowly redefined by the innovations in the mobile devices, high-speed internet, cloud computing, and e-commerce infrastructure, which allowed bringing more consumer convenience, choice, and price transparency (Teodorescu et al., [2023](#); Dwivedi et al., [2022](#)). Online shopping was becoming more accepted by consumers, and retailers were digitally marketing selectively with tools like social media promotion, email marketing, and advertising using search engines, mostly as supportive and not substitutive to their in-store strategies (Kotler et al., [2021](#); Verhoef et al., [2021](#)).

With the onset of COVID-19, this trend was essentially shaken. Lockdowns, social distancing requirements, and mobility confinements made the physical activities in retail business temporarily unsustainable and companies had to restructure their selling and marketing strategies within a very short time (Dewi & Lusikooy, [2024](#)). The retailers had to go through the process of going digital faster not as a strategic decision but as a survival mechanism, and have less time to experiment or learn (Niewczas-Dobrowolska et al., [2024](#)). Retailers used digital platforms such as e-commerce websites, mobile applications, and social media channels as the main points of customer contact, which they used to express value propositions and conduct transactions (Nanda et al., [2021](#); Pantano et al., [2020](#)).

At the same time, the consumer behaviour changed radically. The perceived risk related to the physical shopping settings and health concerns caused a universal transition to online shopping in terms of utilitarian and hedonic products (Rahmanov et al., [2021](#); Kou, [2021](#)). This did not just apply to the necessities but to electronics, clothes and cosmetics, and luxury goods, which speaks to its structural and not temporary shift in consumption patterns (Sheth, [2020](#); Afonso et al., [2024](#)). The current trends indicate that various consumers who learning online shopping in the pandemic have not abandoned them and transformed long-term perceptions of retail availability, speed of service and personalization (OECD, [2024](#); McKinsey & Company, [2020](#)).

Online demand exploded, and this has revealed fatal gaps in the digital infrastructure of retailers. Companies had to deal with unprecedented traffic volumes on their websites, maintain the stability of their platforms, and provide their users with smooth experiences provided limited operational conditions (Balachandar & Jayanthiladevi, [2023](#); Gulfraz et al., [2022](#)). The quality of user interface, the responsiveness of the web site, and the navigation have become the determining variables in consumer satisfaction and retention in the digital context (Punchoojit and Hongwarittorn, [2017](#); Petkovic et al., [2020](#)). Due to this, digital marketing strategies started to overlap with the fields of information systems design, management of customer experience, and service operations and disaggregate traditional functional boundaries in the retail organizations (Pantano et al., [2020](#)).

In addition to the interface design, confidence and security became the key issues when it came to digital marketing in the pandemic era. The proliferation of online transactions also increased consumer awareness of the issue of privacy of personal and financial data, cybersecurity, and payment security, because personal and financial information was actively exchanged on online platforms (Karangara & Manta, [2024](#); Nagel, [2020](#); Piersiala & Kabus, [2023](#)). Recent research highlights that perceived digital trust is currently a mediating factor between digital marketing interaction and brand loyalty and that perceived digital trust is more relevant in the conditions of a post-crisis when the consumer is more risk-sensitive (Huang & Rust, [2025](#); Martin et al., [2024](#)).

To address these issues, retailers are resorting more and more to using data analytics and artificial intelligence to help make decisions in real-time and conduct personalised marketing communication. Digital marketing made possible by analytics enabled companies to follow consumer behaviour, determine new demand trends and respond dynamically to price, promotions and inventory policies (Micus et al., [2023](#); Ajiga et al., [2024](#)). The personalisation and advanced targeting did not only contribute to the better customer experience but also promoted the efficiency of marketing and the return on the investment, which supports analytics as a strategic resource, but not an operational one (Okorie et al., [2024](#); Tasnim et al., [2025](#)). Real-time information-capability has since been a hallmark of digitally resilient retailers who adopt volatile market conditions (Celdrán et al., [2024](#); McKinsey & Company, [2020](#)).

Although the literature on COVID-19 and digital marketing is rapidly expanding, the available literature is imbalanced, with the overwhelming presence of short-term reactions and immediate outcomes of the crisis. Numerous articles report on tactical changes in the use of the channel, social media, or e-commerce at the time of lockdowns (Gao et al., [2023](#); Nanda et al., [2021](#)), but relatively few of them describe the sustainability and general strategic consequences of such transitions, and especially in the context of the UK retail. Recent reviews point out a consistent lack of knowledge regarding the potential long-lasting successes or failures in the creation of brand perception, consumer relations, and organisational resilience due to pandemic-induced digital marketing practices (Pantano et al., [2020](#); Rose et al., [2023](#); Verhoef et al., [2021](#)).

To fill this gap, the current study examines the adaptability of the digital marketing strategies of the UK retailers to the COVID-19 pandemic and discusses the perceived short- and long-term impact of the strategy adaptations both professionally and as a consumer. Using a qualitative research approach in the form of semi-structured interviews with digital marketing professionals and consumers, the study offers a deep empirical understanding of the strategic decision-making process, behavior change and institutionalisation of digital marketing practices in the post-pandemic retail setting. With its combination of the established digital marketing theory and the current evidence of post-COVID conditions, this study will contribute to the development of the scholarly knowledge on digital marketing resilience, strategic change, and consumer behaviour in the context of a systemic disruption.

2 Literature

2.1 UK Retail Sector Technological Marketing Before COVID-19

The UK retail sector was already heading towards the digitally mediated marketing and commerce even before COVID-19 due to the maturation of the platforms and the shift towards the digitally mediated shopping experiences among consumers (Dash & Chakraborty, [2021](#); Nagarjuna & Izhar, [2024](#)). During this timeframe, e-commerce was a huge complement to store-based retailing, but it more and more influenced the discovery and evaluation stages of the customer experience, including searchable product data, online reviews, and social media-enabled brand experiences (Dwivedi et al., [2022](#)). Not more online sales, but a more general reorganization of how retailers generated value through online touchpoints, data, and personalization was a marketing perspective in the pre-COVID transition (Kannan, [2017](#); Verhoef et al., [2021](#)).

In particular, the role of social media became the focus of retail communication and co-creation that allow two-way communication, fast feedback loops, and dynamic customization of the offers in response to changing tastes (Dash & Chakraborty, [2021](#); Nagarjuna & Izhar, [2024](#)). Meanwhile, the emerging power of analytics and customer relationship management (CRM) tools enhanced the importance of segmentation and targeting, enabling retailers to personalize at scale and compete based on experience and not on price only (Habib et al., [2024](#); Van Tonder et al., [2023](#)). In the late 2010s, indicators of official retail in the UK already provided evidence of the increasing strategic significance of online channels, and the trendline of the ratio of internet sales indicated that they were structural rather than experimental (Ward, [2025](#); Office for National Statistics, [2026](#)).

2.2 The effect of the COVID-19 on the Consumer Behavior and Digital marketing

COVID-19 was a discontinuity shock, which condensed years of digital adoption into months. The combination of lockdowns, mobility limits, and an increase in worries about health risk caused consumers to move online and boosting their dependency on e-commerce to replace both necessities and non-essential categories (Chen & Qasim, [2021](#); Jiang et al., [2021](#); Sheth, [2020](#)). The pandemic also altered the place of consumer purchase as well as consumer expectations of retailers; in particular, reliability of delivery, responsiveness of service, and transparency of product availability (Mahdavi et al., [2021](#); Pantano et al., [2020](#); Sun et al., [2023](#)).

This high rate of behavioral shifting compelled a shift in digital marketing practice, as well. Retailers accelerated performance marketing and online customer service and also implemented interactive technology that minimized the uncertainty of remote shopping situations, including AI-powered chatbots, virtual try-on services, and AR/VR-enhanced product experiences (Chen & Qasim, [2021](#); Sun et al., [2023](#)). The marketing role went beyond the communication to experience orchestration across digital only interfaces, in which frictionless navigation, quick loading, and perceived security became the elements of brand value (Huddleston et al., [2023](#); Rahmanov et al., [2021](#); Kou, [2021](#)).

Notably, the literature posits that the COVID-19 did not just cause a temporary substitution, but it also reinstated habits and norms of online shopping, rendering e-commerce socially legitimate and operationally expected (Chen & Qasim, [2021](#); Roggeveen and Sethuraman, 2020; Sheth, [2020](#)). This is in line with a fact that internet sales ratios underwent a severe structural change within the period of pandemic, and it has not lost its strategic relevance to the retailer outside the pandemic mode (Ward, [2025](#); Office for National Statistics, [2026](#)).

2.3 On-Going Frameworks in the Marketing Strategies

Marketing as the process of creation, communication, delivery and exchange of value with the customer is a dynamic process in itself, especially in the turbulent times of technology-driven market (Kotler & Pfoertsch, [2007](#)). This dynamism was enhanced by the pandemic and strengthened a more general trend: the marketing strategy has become more and more reliant on digital capabilities (analytics, automation, personalization, and platform integration), rather than on the ingenuity of marketing promotion (Dwivedi et al., [2022](#); Verhoef et al., [2021](#)).

In this connection, it can be argued that the modern retail marketing strategy can be seen as a continuous capability-building process where retailers continuously update channel positions, content approaches, customer experiences, and service designs based on new technologies and consumer demands. This contributes to the fact that post-COVID strategies pay an exceptionally great deal of attention to experience consistency, adaption speed, and data-driven decision-making as opposed to individual campaign accomplishments.

2.4 Growth of Omnichannel Strategies

One of the strategic consequences of the pandemic was an exaggeration of omnichannel thinking: retailers began to desire a flawless interaction between the online and offline touchpoint, such as access to inventory, unified messages, and service recovery (Mangalaraj et al., [2023](#); Zhang et al., [2025](#)). Omnichannel capability emerged as a resiliency tool- enabling companies to retain customer access during disruptions and at the same time retain the brand continuity (Harun & Rokonuzzaman, [2021](#); Sheth, [2020](#)).

This transformation was technologically based on integrated inventory, CRM upgrades, and AI-assisted analytics that link customer data across channels and allow next best action marketing. However, based on ongoing evidence, omnichannel customer experiences are the way to influence engagement and value capture, which confirms the relevance of omnichannel marketing as a strategic but not tactical option in the post-pandemic period (Rahman et al., [2025](#)).

2.5 Paying attention to Sustainability and Ethical Marketing.

The consumer focus on environmental and social impact also increased with COVID-19, lowering retailer value propositions through the prism of digital marketing communications. Retail campaigns also started to focus more on responsible sourcing, greener package, lower carbon footprint, and community-focused campaigns- commonly presented as storytelling and content marketing formats that are optimized on social and mobile platforms.

It is not the only reputational turn: it is also a strategic one, since digitally mediated transparency (reviews, social sharing, brand scrutiny) increases the price of what appears to be inconsistency between claims and practices. Thus, ethical positioning is a market indicator and a trust device in digitally intensive consumer journeys

2.6 Major Problems: COVID-19, Consumer Behavior, and Digital Marketing

The first case of COVID-19 (initially identified in the end of 2019 and spreading in the world in early 2020) provoked unprecedented public-health policies, including lockdowns, social distancing, and travel bans, that disrupted the activities of retailers and compelled them to digitize as rapidly as possible (Jiang et al., [2021](#)). This is in line with the larger thesis that the pandemic acted as a catalyst to digitalization, which hastened structural changes that were already occurring in retail (Mangalaraj et al., [2023](#)).

Consumer behavior is defined as a process by which consumers choose, buy, and consume products, based on cultural, social, individual, and psychological influences (Fischer & Otnes, [2006](#)). The significance of safety and convenience during COVID-19 was increasing rapidly and compelled the consumers to shift toward e-commerce and contactless shopping, and to explore the quality of digital services more critically (Afonso et al., [2024](#); Chen & Qasim, [2021](#)).

Digital marketing entails the use of digital platforms (web, search, social media, email, and mobile) to communicate with and target customers as they spend more time on them. The pandemic also increased the focus on digital marketing expenditure since it became the main channel of contacting customers and keeping relationships in the physical conditions of severe restrictions (Dash & Chakraborty, [2021](#); Dwivedi et al., [2022](#)). The increasing utilization of superior technologies (AI, VR/AR, automation) and the managerial issues of maintaining performance in a more intricate digital ecosystem are also emphasized in post-COVID scholarship.

2.7 Digital Marketing Pre- and Post-COVID-19 Comparison

Even pre-COVID, retail digital marketing was more likely to develop gradually: companies developed an online presence, tried to use social interaction, and offered personalization with the help of analytics, and many companies still depended on traditional channels and in-store conversion (Ward, [2025](#)). Online presence tended to reinforce offline marketing as opposed to the reorganization of the whole operating model.

After the COVID, digital marketing turned out to be a central operation. The retailers had no choice but to maximize e-commerce conversion, scale digital customer support, and implement data-intensive targeting tactics to keep sales going despite stores access disruption (Dash & Chakraborty, [2021](#)). According to the literature, this time reinforced the strategic aspects of the omnichannel strategies and increased the investment in the digital infrastructure (Mangalaraj et al., [2023](#)). The structural applicability of internet sales in the post-pandemic retail sector is also highlighted by official UK retail indicators (Ward, [2025](#); Office for National Statistics, [2026](#)).

2.8 Obstacles to Digital Marketing That Businesses Will Encounter after COVID-19

Firms have found it difficult to merge digital and traditional marketing despite the advantages. Integration should be cross-channel, based on talent allocation, and aligning the brand message, which can be resource-heavy--in particular, in companies that maintain old systems or are not online-savvy (Kraus et al., [2022](#)).

Another key issue is data privacy and data security. The increase in reliance on online transactions leads to a higher vulnerability to cyber risks and a growth in regulatory compliance obligations and thus governance, consent management, and secure payment design are critical to preserving trust (Celdrán et al., [2024](#)). These obligations should be in line with the data protection laws in the UK setting that defines the manner in which retailers gather, store, and utilize consumer data.

There is also the problem of technology volatility that makes strategy more complicated: digital marketing tools are changing fast, and one should learn and manage change in the organization constantly (Chen & Qasim, [2021](#)). Last but not the least, personalization, quick service, and contactless convenience are a standard feature of post-pandemic consumers that may need advanced analytics and AI services that are not equally available at all the firms (Gupta et al., [2026](#); Huddleston et al., [2023](#)).

2.9 Theoretical Foundation (Rewritten, with Better Rigor and Connection)

Recent studies suggest that the UK retail digitization went faster than it would have had no COVID-19. Although technological advances and consumers were already changing the business model of retail more towards online than offline, the constraints of the pandemic accelerated the rate and scale of conversion, compelling the rapid redesign of online marketing and service systems to continue operating (Nanda et al., [2021](#); Mangalaraj et al., [2023](#)). The heightened shyness of consumers in face-to-face communication transformed the shopping norms of all categories, increasing the dependency on digital platforms and rising the criteria of reliability, convenience, and the perceived safety (Chen & Qasim, [2021](#); Jiang et al., [2021](#); Sheth, [2020](#)).

According to the perspective of retailer capabilities, the pandemic increased the significance of digital interfaces. The usability of the websites, their speed, the easiness of the navigation and checkout became the converting and loyalty determinants (Huddleston et al., [2023](#)). Simultaneously, the retailers increased digital communication (social, email, paid media) to be still noticeable and convincing in a rather virtual marketplace (Dash & Chakraborty, [2021](#)). These changes support the idea that COVID-19 was a disruption in the retail strategy: numerous brick-and-mortar companies were forced to establish strong digital business models in order to survive (Sheth, [2020](#); Mangalaraj et al., [2023](#)).

In its operations, the expansion of online business demanded a solid IT infrastructure that could support large traffic and volumes of transactions, as well as coordinate the quality of services and stability of the system (Nagel, [2020](#); Tueanrat et al., [2021](#)). Simultaneously, the heightened digital usage also made the issues of privacy, secure payment, and consumer trust more salient, and the perceived risk and governance, as well as growth, had to be considered by the firms (Celdrán et al., [2024](#); Ding et al., [2021](#)). Data analytics also turned into a strategic tool to detect changes in consumer demand, to be able to better segment it, target it and manage it in terms of promotion

(Ding et al., [2021](#); Meyers et al., [2023](#)).

In order to describe such two-sided dynamics (consumer adoption and retailer technology uptake), this paper is rooted in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which in combination form an integrated prism of explaining the UK retail digital transformation in the COVID-19 times. TPB, put forward by Ajzen (1991), is an approach that defines behavior in terms of intention, influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, which is why it is appropriate to model the change in consumers online shopping intentions and behavior triggered by the pandemic (Meena & Kumar, [2022](#); Tornikoski & Maalaoui, [2019](#)).

In the context of COVID-19 the relative importance of risk and benefits may have been reconsidered and safety and convenience became more conspicuous; fear and perceived risk in brick-and-mortar stores may consequently change the motivation towards online shopping (Van Tonder et al., [2023](#)). Peer pressure and narratives on social media also contributed to the power of subjective norms because e-commerce became a typical and even suggested solution, which was socially legitimized (Hoque et al., [2022](#); Lee & Cho, [2023](#)). Lastly, perceived behavioral control Confidence in digital skills, platform usability, and payment competence contributed to the explanation of the faster adaptation of some consumers than others, which influenced intention and real buying behavior (Fischer & Otnes, [2006](#); Van Tonder et al., [2023](#)).

Later proposed by Davis (1989), TAM adds to the explanation of the technology adoption process by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, which is why it is particularly relevant to explain why retailers accepted the specific digital marketing technologies during the crisis situation (Mugo, [2017](#); Gupta et al., [2026](#)). The retailers under the pressure of social distancing embraced the tools they believed were helpful in keeping the engagement and sales at the same level (e.g., AI chatbots, live chat, AR/VR product interaction, etc.) and those that could be implemented within the shortest possible time without intensive training or system disruption (Ciarli et al., [2021](#); Kolidakis et al., [2024](#); Tueanrat et al., [2021](#)).

Since the retail marketing of the post-COVID period is becoming more and more omnichannel, TPB-TAM integration offers a more powerful theoretical foundation compared to any of the two models of consumer-side intention, or retailer-side technology uptake, that determine the digital environment consumers are exposed to (Greenberg & Schneider, [2024](#); Hänninen et al., [2021](#)). The shift towards omnichannel consistency (mobile-responsive commerce, integrated touchpoints, unified branding) only supports the idea that the results of brand visibility, acquisition, and retention rely on the combined performance of consumer acceptance and development of retail capabilities (Ghesh et al., [2024](#); Harun & Rokonuzzaman, [2021](#); Mangalaraj et al., [2023](#)).

Although the recent trend in COVID-related digital marketing research is rapid, empirical data available on the effectiveness of long-term digital marketing intervention and sustainability are still relatively scarce in the context of the UK retail industry (Dash & Chakraborty, [2021](#); Mahdavi et al., [2021](#); Pantano et al., [2020](#)). Researchers argue as to whether the observed changes can be seen as temporary crisis substitutes whereas the underlying marketing and consumer culture changes are structural (Dixit et al., [2023](#); Lee et al., [2025](#)). Similarly, studies on the topic tend to consider individual platforms or individual tools instead of the synergetic performance outcomes of coordinated, multi-technology digital marketing campaigns (Alnawas et al., [2023](#); Loo, [2025](#); Wang et al., [2025](#)). There is still a lack of knowledge as to whether such strategies result in brand performance and company solidity beyond the crisis horizon (Al-Hawary & Al-Fassed, [2022](#); Badgar et al., [2022](#)).

Thus, this paper discusses these gaps by assessing the short- and long-term consequences of UK retailers digital marketing practices implemented or more accentuated during COVID-19- how these measures change the sustainable consumer behavioral change, brand management outcomes,

and competitive performance with the foundations of TPB and TAM as integrative approaches to explaining their findings (Greenberg & Schneider, [2024](#); Hänninen et al., [2021](#)). Thus, it can help advance the theory in the field of retail digital transformation and offer a practical understanding of the profitability and sustainability of blended digital-traditional marketing approaches in a post-pandemic context (Ward, [2025](#); Office for National Statistics, [2026](#)).

3 Methodology

3.1 Philosophical positioning and research design

The research design that was chosen in this study was qualitative and exploratory in nature to elicit a rich information of how an increase in digital marketing and online buying conducted in the UK was experienced and interpreted by the retailers and consumers during the COVID-19. Qualitative methodology is expected to be used in situations where the primary aim of the research is to establish meaning, interpretation, and context and not to estimate the population parameters, i.e. where the behaviours and responses of organisations are influenced by uncertainty and change (Creswell and Creswell, [2017](#)). This paper was framed in an interpretivist logic, which presupposes that consumer reactions (e.g., trust, perceived safety, convenience) and retailer choices (e.g., platform investments, omnichannel redesign) are socially constructed and can only be discussed in terms of the story that participants provide instead of being analyzed through secondary indicators (Bryman, [2016](#); Saunders et al., [2019](#)).

In line with modern qualitative reporting standards, the research design was based on the priorities of thick description, detailed recording of the processes, and analytic openness to ensure that readers can assess the fairness and extrapolation of the results to other samples (Nowell et al., [2017](#); Braun & Clarke, [2024](#)).

3.2 Study context

The case is placed in the UK retail business, where the COVID-19 limitations increased the pace of digital use and changed the relative significance of physical and digital touchpoints. The situation is relevant since retail outcomes and brand success in the time of the pandemic were tightly connected with the level of digital infrastructure (e.g., the quality of the website, the safety of online payments), the responsiveness of services, and the readiness of consumers to change their everyday consumption habits to the online one. It is a contextual anchoring that is critical to understanding why digital marketing shifted to a supportive role to a core operational facility throughout the period of crisis, which affected the decision-making of the retailer and behavioural adjustment of consumers.

3.3 Population, sampling strategy and subjects

The information rich participants were recruited using a purposive sampling strategy to provide direct responses to changes and lived shopping experiences of digital marketing during COVID-19 (Patton, [2002](#); Saunders et al., [2019](#)). Sampling was planned to reflect two vantage areas, which are complementary, namely, (1) organisational-level decision-making (retail digital marketing managers) and (2) consumer-level adoption and assessment (online consumers).

Overall, 12 semi-structured interviews were held, including 6 digital marketing managers of UK retail organisations and 6 consumers who have been using e-commerce regularly due to pandemic restrictions. The managers who participated in the study were chosen according to their experience in digital marketing (at least three years) so that they had enough exposure to the pre-pandemic standards and pandemic-induced strategic changes. Consumers included in the sample were chosen according to frequent online shopping behaviour at the time of COVID-19, and this aspect guarantees relevance with the behaviour change focus of the research.

The sufficiency of the sample size was rationalised on a logic of saturation, which acknowledges

the fact that sample size in qualitative inquiry is based on the depth of inquiry, coverage and heterogeneity of the phenomenon rather than a numeric imperative (Hennink & Kaiser, [2022](#)). Moreover, the research adhered to the recent trend of observing thematic completeness through iterative processes when analysing data, which is consistent with the recent recommendations of maintaining proximity and true code saturation as pragmatic levels of analysis in the qualitative research of interviews (Squire et al., [2024](#)).

3.4 Data collection procedure

Interviews were used to gather the data in semi-structured formats, as they offer a flexible format that enables the researcher to compare respondents yet allows inquiring into emergent knowledge. This is especially in cases where organisational strategies and consumer behaviours can change quickly in the case of crisis situations. An interview guide was constructed and optimized to conform to the research questions, sequencing consistency, and the interpretability; which represents the best-practice advice on creating high-quality semi-structured instruments (Kallio et al., [2016](#)).

The interviews were carried out online (e.g., video or internet-mediated calling), which was also reasonable due to the post-pandemic research conditions and practical advantages of working with geographically dispersed respondents. Internet-mediated qualitative interviewing methodologically is being increasingly accepted as plausible when the researcher pays attention to rapport, privacy, consent, and recording (Abedi et al., [2024](#)). The interviews were audio-recorded (because the participants were informed about it) and lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. During and immediately after interviews notes were also taken to record some initial impressions of analysis and immediate contextual impressions that were used to inform subsequent interpretation.

3.5 Time horizon

The research involved a cross-sectional time frame, which entailed the accounts offered by the participants of the pandemic-period behaviour and change in strategies at a single point in time. A cross-sectional qualitative design will be suitable when the goal is to accumulate a structured knowledge of trends and processes (e.g., why consumers were more likely to trust online channels; how retailers re-engineered online communication), but not to quantify change paths over time (Saunders et al., [2019](#)).

3.6 Data analysis strategy

They were transcribed and analysed through thematic analysis because it is an adequate method to discover patterned meanings across stakeholder groups and linking individual narratives to overall strategic and behavioural processes (Braun and Clarke, [2006](#)). The analysis was performed in a systematic order in line with the thematic analysis stages, including familiarisation, initial coding, theme development, theme review/refinement, and narrative definition, although there was an attempt to make sure that theme building was based on the dataset and directly connected to the research questions.

Qualitative software (MAXQDA) facilitated coding and theme management and contributed to the increased transparency of the process as it allowed recording transcripts, codebooks, analytic memos, and changes in themes systematically. Qualitative analysis with the support of software is popular to enhance auditability and organise the structure of complex codes, especially in the case of multi-participant interviews (Kuckartz & Radiker, [2019](#)).

To enhance the level of analytical rigour and reporting quality, the research matched the interpretation with the modern recommendations that highlight the necessity of capturing analytic decisions, establishing the connection between data excerpts and topic assertions, and not subjecting thematic analysis to the mechanical process of employing a coding tool (Braun & Clarke, [2024](#)). The tradition of worked-example of reflexive thematic analysis was also used as a

standard of making it clear how the codes and themes were constructed based on the accounts of the participants instead of presumed a priori (Pearson & Myall, [2025](#)).

3.7 Reliability and quality assurance

Procedures and processes associated with credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability helped to enhance trustworthiness. The credibility was ensured by recruiting participants that had first-hand experience of the phenomenon and probing questions to narrow down ambiguity and elicit superficial answers. Contextual detail (UK retail setting; role of participants; duration of the interview) supported transferability so that the readers could assess the applicability to other retail settings. Reliability and credibility were ensured by providing an audit trail (interview guide versions, coding memos, note taking on theme development) and by adhering to systematic processes in eliminating the threat of selective interpretation (Nowell et al., [2017](#)).

Justification of sample size was considered a quality concern as opposed to a numerical goal. Analytic adequacy and thematic coverage were iteratively monitored in the study, as it is aligned with evidence-based saturation discourse in the context of recent studies in qualitative methods (Hennink & Kaiser, [2022](#); Squire et al., 2024).

3.8 Ethical aspects and data safeguarding

The principles of ethical practice were created on the voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality/ anonymity, and safe data management. The participants were notified about the objective of the research, the anticipated length of interviews, and the recording process and about the possibility of withdrawing. To minimize transcript identifiability, personal identifiers were taken away and transcripts were reported using pseudonyms or role names.

Since interviews can encompass personal data (including voice recordings and potentially sensitive work-related information), the study complied with UK expectations of data protection (including lawful processing, minimisation, secure storage and limitation of purpose) as well as UK GDPR-equivalent advice in the context of research. The procedures were especially significant because of the digital character of data collection and storage in the remote interviewing setting.

4 Analysis

The section provides the results of 12 semi-structured interviews with 6 UK retail digital marketing professionals (MP1-MP6) and 6 consumers (C1-C6). The discussion examined the effect of COVID-19 on the digital marketing strategy and consumer decision-making in the UK retail market, and the extent to which participants viewed the changes as short-term results of the crisis or long-term evolutions. Thematic analysis with the assistance of MAXQDA resulted in three broad themes, namely: (1) Adaptation of strategies, covering how the marketing activity quickly shifts to digital activity, faster adoption of tools, and KPI-based optimisation; (2) Consumer behaviour changes, including how participants anticipate that certain practices of the pandemic (e.g. digital-first communication, virtual experiences, technology-enabled service) will continue post-crisis; and (3) Long-term implications and innovations, which covers the expectation of how participants believe that some of the practices of the pandemic (e.g. The results are discussed below and supported with interview excerpts. In cases where frequency counts are being provided, they reflect the number of those who mentioned an idea at least once, they are descriptive measures of repetition but not measure of significance.

In interviews, respondents defined the COVID-19 as an impetus that accelerated the digitalisation process in UK retail and quickened the pace of marketing implementation and consumer demands. The marketing practitioners focused on the rapidity of the strategic redirection, the use of interactive technologies (e.g., chatbots and VR/AR), and increased reliance on metrics and KPIs

as an element of continuous improvement. Consumers claimed the explicit move toward online shopping, that they more often connected with brands using the digital world (especially social media), and that they responded more to campaigns that provided valuable information, inventive and inspiring experiences, or signs of concern during the crisis. Notably, the two stakeholder groups perceived some of the changes, in particular, the digital-first engagement and online shopping habits, as the ones that are likely to be ingrained in the post-pandemic retail environment.

4.1 Themes and sub-themes

Figure 1. Word cloud of transcripts of interviews (MAXQDA). The visualization shows the prevalence of frequently used words in the interviews of digital marketing professionals and consumers, which points at the relevance of COVID-19 as a contextual factor and dominance of digital marketing, online interaction, branding, and campaign activity in the responses of the interviewees.

The word cloud offers a summary of the frequent terms in the dataset in the form of a description as the most frequent words include pandemic, digital, online, brand, campaign, and social. This pattern is also coherent with the prevailing narrative in the context of interviews, as COVID-19 served as the background of contextual decision-making and behavioural change, whereas digital channels, branding, and campaign activity were the main focus when it comes to sustaining a relationship with the customer. Since word clouds are shown in terms of frequency, and not conceptual precedence, this result is considered to be described as complementary evidence, the thematic analysis, which is backed up by participant quotes, gives substantive meaning.

Table 1. Themes and sub-themes identified from interviews (n = 12) with descriptive prevalence counts.

Theme	Sub-theme	Participants (n)
Adaptation of strategies	Rapid implementation and adjustment	5
	Utilisation of new tools and technologies	6
	Measuring success and KPIs	6
Consumer behaviour changes	Shift to online shopping	6
	Increased engagement with brands via digital channels	5
	Impact of digital marketing campaigns	4
Long-term implications and innovations	Permanent changes in marketing practices	6
	Innovations in digital marketing	5
	Future role of digital marketing	6

5 Theme 1: Adaptation of strategies

Theme 1 captures how retail marketing teams responded to the pandemic through **rapid strategic shifts**, accelerated adoption of digital tools, and intensified measurement of performance. Professionals characterised adaptation as urgent and iterative, largely driven by reduced store-based activity and the need to preserve customer access, engagement, and sales continuity.

5.1 Sub-theme 1.1 Rapid implementation and adjustment

According to marketing experts, the shift towards digital was not gradual. Rather, it was at a high pace with retailers shifting resources towards the channels that could sustain engagement during lockdowns and decreased mobility. Social media and email were established as the fast and reliable means of company visibility, and live streaming and webinars were also implemented as the alternatives to a face-to-face touchpoint.

MP1: "Quite on the contrary, the transition to the digital marketing strategy was almost instant. To ensure the engagement and updates of our customers, the main method was and is social media and emails.

MP3: The pandemic changed the course of our work; the instances of face-to-face communication with the clients became more common. We have begun to utilize live streaming and Webinars as

the primary communication tools with the clients, and this practice was not a priority to us before the pandemic.

These excerpts show that the pandemic established an environment of strategic speed as a fundamental ability. Adaptation was positioned as critical to keeping the connection with the consumers, updating them promptly, and ensuring they do not lose interest in the time that regular routines of normal retail operations were disrupted.

5.2 Sub-theme 1.2 Exploitation of new tools and technologies

A preemptive surge of technology utilization was defined by the professionals as a replacement of diminished physical contact and also to cope with the volume of online interaction. The approximate experience of products in a remote setting was estimated with the help of VR/AR, whereas chatbots were implemented to provide constant service during high demand, especially during lockdowns.

MP4: "We capitalized on VR and AR in selling our products to provide a means of testing the products without necessarily moving to the shops.

MP2: Chatbots, in our opinion, should be regarded as an assistant that would allow us to process many of the inquiries raised by clients and customers that need assistance. We could answer the demands of our customers 24/7, particularly, in the times of lock-downs.

These descriptions demonstrate that the introduction of technology was defined as a working reaction to the changing conditions of the market and not an experimental variant of marketing. Consumer uncertainty was decreased through interactive tools to keep the responsiveness, which preserves customer experience and retention.

5.3 Sub-theme 1.4 KPI measurement success

The main focus of all marketing professionals was that fast adaptation needed to be evaluated constantly and the key to evaluating the effectiveness of the revised strategies was in the KPIs. Measures like click-throughs, engagement, conversion, ROI, and customer feedback (including reviews) were again-and-again discussed as pointers that directed the process of unrelenting optimization of campaigns and channel activity.

MP5: "The success of the campaigns was operationalized using measures like the click through rates, activity on social networks, and overall sales conversion being some of the important measures of the success of the campaigns.

MP6: "Similarly, customer reviews and online comments also constituted the yardsticks in order to identify the effectiveness of the established and executed strategies since positive comments indicated that the strategic directions and efforts were worthy. All of these statements suggest that the performance monitoring was not marginal; it served as a means of making rapid decisions in the context of uncertainty. Data-driven optimisation facilitated the accelerated learning and aided the retailers to find out which digital practices are to be scaled, modified, or shut down.

Theme 1 learning: Pandemic-driven factors increased the rate at which digital marketing was effectively implemented and allowed fast alteration, adoption of tools, and optimisation based on KPIs which became the hallmark of the retail marketing strategy.

6 Theme 2: The shift in consumer behavior

Theme 2 indicates the description of consumers how the COVID-19 transformed the process of purchase and brand relationships. There were overarching trends in an overall movement towards online purchases, an interest in brands via digital media to update and reassure, and an interest in campaigns that added value to the simple promotion.

6.1 Sub-theme 2.1 Going to online shopping

Online shopping could have grown significantly during the pandemic, and all consumers expressed this as a significant need, as well as a perceived safety measure. Critically, the interviewees pointed out that this change did not just apply to non-essential goods as this was also applied to the forms of essential products like groceries, meaning that pandemic restrictions naturalised online shopping across daily consumption.

C1: I was forced to do nearly all the purchases online in the pandemic, it was much more convenient and safer.

C3: "The necessity goods were required to be ordered online individually, which was not customary in the past, such as purchasing groceries online.

These descriptions indicate that COVID-19 forced the acceleration of behavioural change into a limited period and that online shopping has ceased being a convenience and instead, a necessity and a daily use of buying diverse products.

6.2 Sub-theme 2.3 More interaction with the brands through digital platforms

Higher involvement with brands in social media and other online platforms was described by most consumers. This interaction was directly related to the necessity of the timely information and assurances in the state of uncertainty. According to the participants, trust and repeated purchase were facilitated by the constant updates, and this aspect revealed the relational nature of digital communication.

C2: "I was more active with the social media when considering the brands I was affiliated with, now was a time of lock down so, that implies being informed.

C5: "The timing of the information change generates the interest because it makes me trust the brands and repeat the shopping experience with them regularly.

These words show that digital interaction was something that enhanced service quality and trust-building and was not solely exposure to advertising. Perceived brand reliability was a contributor with information timeliness.

6.3 Sub-theme 2.4 Digital marketing campaign effects

Consumers that went into greater detail regarding campaign impact focused more on digital initiatives that were either experiential, helpful, or socially responsive. The effect of immersive formats like virtual tours brought a feeling of proximity to the brand to some participants. Others appreciated content that was educational or helpful, and saw it as an indication of brand care.

C4: The next digital campaign which I found very attractive was the actual tour on new products with my computer. It was imaginative and gave me the impression that I was more involved to the company.

C6: There were those who valued the brands that were producing educative material during the pandemic that showed that they cared about patients of their clients, too.

These quotes indicate that the campaign in the situation of the pandemic was not characterized by persuasion only; the value was provided by the experience boost, informational backing, and perceived sympathy.

Theme 2 lesson: COVID-19 stimulated online shopping and increased the dependence of consumers on online interactions, and when informed in time and provided with value-driven online campaigns, trust and loyalty improve.

7 Theme 3: Long term implications and innovations

Theme 3 draws the collective anticipation that the participants have that most of the pandemic-induced changes would continue. The two groups of stakeholders reported COVID-19 as creating long-term changes to shopping patterns, marketing, and innovation paths- indicating that digital marketing is structurally entrenched into the UK retail strategy.

Sub-theme 3.1 Enduring the shift in the marketing practices.

Experts and customers were satisfied that some of the practices that occur during the pandemic will be applicable in the post-pandemic period. In the case of professionals, virtual events and virtual meetings and increased use of social media were reported as being effective and thus, will probably persist. The consumers also indicated a choice of online shopping because of convenience and availability of products.

MP2: "The strategies adopted by the majority of the organizations and individuals at the age of the pandemic thereby adopt the likes of virtual meetings, virtual events and social media platforms as strategies in that they are proven to be effective.

C6: "I believe I will continue to perform my shopping online after the pandemic due to the convenience and accessibility of goods which an individual receives after online shopping, which are uncomparable.

These views point to the fact that the pandemic not only precipitated short-term channel replacement, but it changed the attitudes toward convenience, availability, and interaction standards and established the digital channels as long-term retail infrastructure.

7.1 Sub-theme 3.3 digital marketing innovations

Respondents defined innovation as a direct reaction to crisis-related limitations and the necessity to maintain involvement without face-to-face interaction. Some of the aspects mentioned included virtual product launches as confidence building and effective, interactive and personalised content, particularly, which used AR as a strategic development, which enhanced consumer experience and brand reach.

MP4: "One of the confidence-building actions that we had been the virtual product launches, it was something that had not been done previously and was effective to the point that it was done online only.

MP5: In regards to additional innovation we customized and interactive our contents; particularly in campaigns where augment reality is involved.

These testimonials indicate that the results of innovation were not accidental: the crisis provided the environment that promoted experimentation and learning faster and reproduced new forms that can still create value even after the pandemic.

7.2 Sub-theme 3.3 Future role of digital marketing

In both cohorts, the digital marketing was defined as an establishment of retailing strategy and consumer anticipation. The professionals in marketing considered digital marketing to be the key element in overall strategy as the pandemic has proven the efficiency of digital channels. The consumers also noted that digital interaction had now formed an aspect of their relationship with the brands and that they would expect to remain digital.

MP1: "Digital marketing strategy is a vital element of the overall strategy due to the influence of the pandemic The pandemic has made people recognize the effectiveness of digital channels to communicate with the customer.

C2: "Other specific ways digitally marketing has now become a thing that I do to communicate with brands; I would anticipate that even after the pandemic, brands would remain

highly visible in the digital space.

Such extracts support the fact that post-pandemic retail competition will persist in relying on digital presence, responsiveness, and the capability of providing consistent online customer experience through online touchpoints.

Theme 3 takeaway: The participants expect long-term changes - the tendency towards being digital-first, continuing innovation, and long-term expectations of active brand presence in digital channels.

On the whole, the results reveal a consistent trend: the COVID-19 has spurred the digitalisation of retailers and has also changed the consumer shopping behaviour and expectations in the UK retail market. Retailers offered rapid channel transitions and increased use of enabling technologies along with heavy dependence on KPIs to drive consistent adaptation in the short term. The customers reported a general trend towards online shopping, increased interaction with the brand through online platforms, and increased responsiveness to campaigns with utility, reassurance, and immersive experiences. Notably, both stakeholder groups expected that many of the developments that will characterize the pandemic period, especially the dominance of digital-first communication, technology-driven service, and online shopping trends to continue even after the crisis, will continue to linger long after the crisis has ended. These findings are addressed in the next section regarding the previous literature and theoretical background of the study (TPB and TAM) and implications on post-pandemic retail marketing strategy and consumer behaviour in the UK.

8 Discussion

This paper aimed at describing how the COVID-19 influenced the digital marketing of the UK retail and how consumers reacted to the changes. The qualitative data (marketing experts and customers) show that the pandemic acted as an uninterrupted shock that tightened the years of technological progress and adoption of channels into a limited period of time, which is in line with crisis-induced retail transformation advocacies that emphasised increased digitisation, changed expectations, and re-planned customer experiences (Pantano et al., [2020](#); Roggeveen and Sethuraman, 2020; Sheth, [2020](#)). Such changes are relevant to the UK context as retail is a huge and strategically significant sector and official reporting still follows structural shifts in sales of retail and channel dynamics following the post-pandemic period (Ward, [2025](#); Office for National Statistics [ONS], [2026](#)).

There are three findings that are most prominent across the dataset. The first one is that retailers were quickly making the transition to technology-enabled promotion and service delivery (e.g., intensifying social media, automating email, chatbots, and immersive tools), an urgency shift to be more digital as an operating model, digital as support. Second, consumers said that there was widespread movement to online shopping and stronger interaction with brands online, which supported the concept of crisis as a way of resetting the consumption norms and routines to a new position (Sheth, [2020](#); Roggeveen & Sethuraman, [2020](#)). Third, both groups believed that several pandemic-related practices would remain, implying that the omnichannel, data-enabled, and experience-centred marketing had been catalysed not only temporarily but also in a longer-term way (Rahman et al., [2025](#); Rahman et al., [2022](#); Office for National Statistics, [2026](#)).

8.1 Theme 1- Strategy adaptation: speed, tools, and performance governance

The former theme shows that strategic agility was not a choice in the COVID-19, but it was a survival skill. The descriptions of the rapid redesign of campaigns and communication channels by the participants are consistent with the scholarship of digital transformation that defines digitisation as a process of capability building that re-invents value creation, customer experience, and business models in turbulence (Verhoef et al., [2021](#); Kraus et al., [2022](#)). According to the

interviews, it is possible to assume that companies resorted to fast-cycle marketing, i.e., testing, changing, and to spending in a new way as physical access and predictable footfall were disrupted, which can be related to more general arguments that the creation of value in retail has increasingly shifted out of physical shelf influence to digitally mediated touchpoint and experience systems (Reinartz et al., [2019](#); Pantano et al., [2020](#)).

The second aspect of Theme 1 is the implementation of new tools and technologies (e.g., chatbots, AR/VR, virtual experiences). They served as uncertainty-reducing strategies, replacing the in-store experience and allowing the continuity of the service, which is consistent with reports that AI-based customer-facing technologies can be used to influence the perceived experience quality and retail success (Gao et al., [2023](#); Rahman et al., [2022](#)). The results of the study can also be characterized as fitting the research on technology-enabled persuasion that demonstrates that immersive and interactive types can increase engagement and purchase intention in case they lower the evaluation risk and enhance product knowledge (Alimamy & Al-Imamy, [2022](#)).

Third, KPIs, conversion and ROI were highlighted by participants, which means that stronger performance governance was accompanied by adaptation. Nevertheless, the after-pandemic context complicates the process of measurement: targeting and tracking become more intertwined with privacy policies and consumer consent, and recent studies demonstrate that regulation and tracking-related prohibitions may affect online surveillance and even pricing practices in the retail sector (Strong et al., [2025](#)). Thus, the study introduces a depth by insisting that the KPI-oriented adjustment of retailers is not only a technical problem but also a governance and trust issue, which is predetermined by compliance environment and perception of consumers.

8.2 Theme 2 - Consumer behavior shifts: migration online, involvement in digital and trust expectations

Theme 2 affirms the fact that the COVID-19 hastened a widespread transition to online shopping in goods and services, including essential ones, and that customers did have to discover new routines within the restrictions they faced. It aligns with the literature on crisis consumption, which demonstrates that health risk, movement restrictions, and uncertainty may shift decision criteria to safety and convenience, and they may stabilize into habit-like patterns (Sheth, [2020](#); Pantano et al., [2020](#)). Notably, respondents did not simply talk about online shopping as available, but as safer, easier and anticipated, following the retail scholarship that the pandemic raised e-commerce to a channel decision to a service expectation (Roggeveen & Sethuraman, [2020](#); Office for National Statistics, [2026](#)).

Another characteristic of the interviews is that there is more contact with brands through digital platforms (particularly social media), which may be explained by the need to satisfy information requirements and eliminate uncertainty during crisis situations. In digital-first journeys, brand meaning includes the quality of the interface and responsiveness of services, thus engagement can be facilitated not only through content appeal, but also through the perceived reliability of the delivery information, handling complaints, and information recovery of the digital service (Rahman et al., [2022](#); Verhoef et al., [2021](#)). The empirical conclusion is that crisis response and response communication is closely linked with response operations transparency in terms of availability indicators, delivery notifications and responsiveness quickness to customers more than promotional communications.

Another contribution of the Theme 2 is the focus on trust signals. Consumers stated that they placed value on informative campaigns and responsive brand communication which can be theoretically traced to perceived risk reduction. This aspect of trust in the UK is becoming more influenced by regulation on data utilization, cookies, and tracking with the integrity of the platforms (Strong et al., [2025](#)). Therefore, the paper builds on the findings of earlier pandemics and demonstrates that consumer engagement is not behavioural (greater time spent online) alone

but also evaluative (greater expectations of credibility, protection of privacy, and reliability of the service).

8.3 Theme 3 - Long term implications and innovations: omnichannel as new normal

According to Theme 3, the respondents anticipate much of the practice of the pandemic period to be left: virtual events, social-first communication, and increased dependency on e-commerce. This is in line with studies that consider omnichannel and digitally integrated experiences a structural reorganization and not a short-lived strategy, with the companies capturing value by having steady journeys and engagement processes across touchpoints (Rahman et al., [2025](#); Verhoef et al., [2021](#)). In a sense, the pandemic seems to have given the strategic reasoning of experience architecture (interface quality, service continuity, and trust) the importance in retail competitiveness as much as product and price (Reinartz et al., [2019](#); Rahman et al., [2022](#)).

The findings of the innovation, which include the introduction of virtual products, interactive features, and the elements of immersion, also attest to the bigger argument that experiential technologies have become the core of customer experience management. It has been proven that interactive marketing and immersive marketing formats have the potential to enhance consumer confidence and intention by lowering the uncertainty of evaluation and raising perceived usefulness (Alimamy & Al-Imamy, [2022](#)). The qualitative findings of the study thus support a shift to communication-based marketing into experience-based marketing, in which technology and service designing becomes a convincing tool.

Lastly, the description of the role of digital marketing presented by the participants in the future must be viewed as the combination of digital and traditional hybridisation and not a digital replacement. Omnichannel capability is also increasingly being framed in literature as a resilience mechanism: it enables continuity in cases where one channel becomes constrained and enables stability in engagement in cases where consumer demands surpass the ability of physical forms to respond (Rahman et al., [2025](#); Ward, [2025](#)). Therefore, the long-term observation of the study is that the future success of retail in the aftermath of COVID is based on institutionalisation of digital capabilities (analytics, automation, excellent interface, trust governance) as opposed to addressing them as only crisis responses.

8.4 Theoretical implications

First, the results enhance the importance of using TPB and TAM as a two-lens model of post-COVID retail change. TPB intention mechanism (attitudes, norms, control) can be used to explain the intention mechanism on the consumer side in that internet shopping became more acceptable and routine in the conditions of risk and constraint (Ajzen, [1991](#)). In the retailer side, TAM describes the reason why the tools wanted to be perceived as useful and simple to implement (e.g., chatbots, automated messaging, interface upgrades) received priority during the crisis response (Davis, [1989](#)). The contribution of the study lies therefore in its ability to depict an integrated behavioural-technological story; the adoption of technologies by retailers will influence the digital space that consumers will consider, and the acceptance by the consumer will stabilise the returns that technology will bring.

Second, the results expand the digital transformation theory by demonstrating the accelerating effects of crises in shifting the digitisation-deeper transformation (capabilities, culture, and business model) process, which is in line with the staged transformation logic that is underlined in digital transformation models (Verhoef et al., [2021](#); Kraus et al., [2022](#)). That is, COVID-19 was both a selection environment and a rewarding capability-building environment and a punishing environment on channel integration.

Third, the research introduces a trust-governance dimension on the retail digital marketing theory. Adaptation based on KPIs cannot exist without privacy and consent limitations, and new studies

reveal that regulatory and tracking modifications can inform retailer surveillance and other outcomes in the market (Strong et al., [2025](#)). This implies that theorisation about post-COVID digital marketing performance should consist of capabilities + trust governance and not capabilities alone.

8.5 Policy implications (UK retail managers, marketers, and policy ecosystem)

In practice, the evidence suggests that the UK retailers need to institutionalize three priorities.

(1) Strategy system of omnichannel experience. The retailers need to consider omnichannel as not multiple channels but a coherent experience with the same availability cues, service recovery, and frictionless transition. This forms the heart of value capture in omnichannel customer experiences (Rahman et al., [2025](#)) and the quality and safety of perceived experience in digital mediated retail journeys (Rahman et al., [2022](#)).

(2) Uncertainty-reducing experience technology. AI customer service and immersive/interactive features are the tools that should be chosen depending on the uncertainty that they minimize (service uncertainty, product evaluation uncertainty, delivery uncertainty). Data can be used to prove the importance of customer experience outcomes that are influenced by AI-enabled customer technologies (Gao et al., [2023](#)) and the role of AR marketing in reinforcing the purchase intention with better evaluation and interaction (Alimamy & Al-Imamy, [2022](#)).

(3) Digital marketing operations based on trust. Greater credibility with customers demands open data practices and meticulous control of approval, tracking and communication. Targeting and measurement UK retailers need to state their privacy requirements and data usage advice (Strong et al., [2025](#)), and acknowledge the fact that alterations in tracking and regulation can affect the retail digital ecosystem and market behaviour (Strong et al., [2025](#)). Besides that, the UK consumer protection reforms tend to increase the significance of transparency in digital persuasion (e.g., the issue of pricing disclosure and manipulation) and credibility of marketplace indicators such as reviews (Hewett, [2021](#)). The managerial implication is obvious: after COVID, digital marketing performance is not solely based on creativity and expenditure, but also on conformity, integrity and transparency as a competitive trust asset.

8.6 Future Research and Limitations

There are some limitations in this study that should be used to interpret and further work. Qualitative sample (12 participants) is first rich in information, but it has a restriction on statistical generalisation; therefore, the results must be interpreted as theory-building and context-specific instead of population estimates. Second, there is a retrospective nature of accounts which can be affected by recall bias; longitudinal qualitative tracking would be more effective at decoupling temporary crisis reactions and long-term strategic change. Third, the research is specific to the UK retail setting; replication of the results in other European economies that might possess varying regulatory environments can investigate the portability of the results.

At least four ways can further develop the field in the future research. (1) Retailer capability improvement, consumer intention change, and performance results in the post-crisis period should be monitored using longitudinal mixed methods to determine the sustainability of strategies that have been born during the pandemic (Ward, [2025](#); Office for National Statistics, [2026](#)). (2) Surveys/SEM or PLS-SEM allows operationalisation of a TPB-TAM integrated framework, and investigating the interrelationship of interface quality, perceived risk, subjective norms and perceived usefulness in predicting online purchasing and loyalty (Ajzen, [1991](#); Davis, 1989). (3) Research on trust and governance must investigate the effects of consumer protection transformation and privacy restrictions on digital marketing measurement, target effectiveness and consumer trust trajectories (Strong et al., [2025](#)). (4) Since retail marketing is at a new stage of automation, scholars ought to investigate AI and generative AI in post-pandemic retail based on

the new research assessing the changing role of AI in marketing strategy and organisational performance (Kshetri, [2024](#)).

8.7 Conclusion

Altogether, the paper shows that COVID-19 has hastened the digitisation of UK retail by driving retailers to fast adjustment of strategies, adoption of technology, and governance by KPIs, and changes consumer behaviour towards online shopping and their increased demands to be digital. The results indicate that numerous practices of the pandemic have taken structural form and strengthened omnichannel experience management and trust governance as long-term strategic priorities. The introduction of consumer-side intention processes (TPB) and retailer-side technology adoption reasoning (TAM) into the study describes a consistent explanation of how the conditions of crisis shifted both demand behaviour and marketing capability formation within the UK retail sector, and has implication of resilience, competitiveness, and sustainable digital marketing performance in the post-COVID environment.

9 References

- Abedi, R., Aghakhani, N., & Haghani, H. (2024). Internet-mediated phone interviews for qualitative research: A methodological review. *Qualitative Research*, 24(6), 809–821. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2024.2421766>
- Acuna-Salazar, M., Lopez-Torres, G., & Molina-Azorín, J. F. (2022). Digital transformation and marketing innovation in retailing: Evidence from post-pandemic contexts. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 68, Article e103012. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2022.103012>
- Afonso, C., Silva, G. M., & Duarte, P. (2024). Consumer behavioural shifts and digital channel dependence after COVID-19. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 23(1), 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.2137>
- Ajiga, O., Oladele, P., & Adebayo, T. (2024). Data analytics capabilities and adaptive marketing performance in digital retailing. *Journal of Business Research*, 168, Article e114128. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.114128>
- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978\(91\)90020-T](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T)
- Al-Hawary, S. I. S., & Al-Fassed, K. J. (2022). The impact of social media marketing on building brand loyalty through customer engagement in Jordan. *International Journal of Business Innovation and Research*, 28(3), 365–387. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBIR.2022.124126>
- Alimamy, S., & Al-Imamy, S. (2022). Customer perceived value through quality augmented reality experiences in retail: The mediating effect of customer attitudes. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 28(4), 428–447.
- Alnawas, I., Al Khateeb, A., & El Hedhli, K. (2023). The effects of app-related factors on app stickiness: the role of cognitive and emotional app relationship quality. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 75, 103412. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2023.103412>
- Badgar, K., Abdalla, N., El-Ramady, H., & Prokisch, J. (2022). Sustainable applications of nanofibers in agriculture and water treatment: a review. *Sustainability*, 14(1), 464. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14010464>
- Balachandar, S., & Jayanthiladevi, A. (2023). Website performance, usability, and consumer retention in e-commerce platforms. *Electronic Commerce Research*, 23(2), 489–512. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10660-022-09590-4>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2024). Reporting reflexive thematic analysis: Practicalities and considerations. *Health Promotion International*, 39(6), Article edaae168. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daae168>

- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Celdrán, A. H., Sánchez, P. M. S., Von der Assen, J., Shushack, D., Gómez, Á. L. P., Bovet, G., Pérez, G. M., & Stiller, B. (2023). Behavioral fingerprinting to detect ransomware in resource-constrained devices. *Computers & Security*, 135, 103510. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cose.2023.103510>
- Chen, X., & Qasim, H. (2021). Does E-Brand experience matter in the consumer market? Explaining the impact of social media marketing activities on consumer-based brand equity and love. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 20(5), 1065–1077. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.1915>
- Ciarli, T., Kenney, M., Massini, S., & Piscitello, L. (2021). Digital technologies, innovation, and skills: Emerging policy issues. *Research Policy*, 50(9), Article e104252. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2021.104289>
- Competition and Markets Authority. (2025, April 30). *Fake reviews: CMA's approach to enforcement and compliance (guidance)*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-cmas-approach-to-the-new-consumer-enforcement-regime>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach* (5th ed.). SAGE.
- Dash, G., & Chakraborty, D. (2021). Digital transformation of marketing strategies during COVID-19: A systematic review and future directions. *Journal of Business Research*, 134, 583–599. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13126735>
- Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 13(3), 319–340. <https://doi.org/10.2307/249008>
- Dewi, N. K., & Lusikooy, R. (2024). Digital resilience and strategic adaptation of retail firms during global crises. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 194, Article e122691. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2023.122691>
- Ding, L., Lam, H. K., Cheng, T. C. E., & Zhou, H. (2021). The contagion and competitive effects across national borders: Evidence from the 2016 Kumamoto earthquakes. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 235, 108115. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpe.2021.108115>
- Dixit, S. K., Correia, A., & Gunasekar, S. (2023). Guest editorial: Re-imagining marketing in a post-pandemic world: challenges, strategies, and solutions. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 26(4), 281–284. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-07-2023-200>
- Dwivedi, Y. K., Hughes, D. L., Wang, Y., Alalwan, A. A., Ahn, S. J., Balakrishnan, J., Barta, S., Belk, R., Buhalis, D., & Dutot, V. (2023). Metaverse marketing: How the metaverse will shape the future of consumer research and practice. *Psychology & Marketing*, 40(4), 750–776. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21767>
- Fischer, E., & Otnes, C. C. (2006). Breaking new ground: Developing grounded theories in marketing and consumer behavior. In R. W. Belk (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods in marketing* (19–30). ElgarOnline.
- Gao, Y., Zhang, H., & Mittal, V. (2023). Marketing responses to COVID-19: Digital engagement and brand outcomes. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 60(4), 632–651. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00222437221134724>
- Ghesh, N., Alexander, M., & Davis, A. (2024). The artificial intelligence-enabled customer experience in tourism: A systematic literature review. *Tourism Review*, 79(5), 1017–1037. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-04-2023-0255>
- Greenberg, M. R., & Schneider, D. (2024). Trust in and building of sustainable local health and well-being programs in the United States. *Sustainability*, 16(4), 1670. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16041670>
- Gulfraz, M. B., Sufyan, M., & Mustak, M. (2022). Digital interface quality and customer satisfaction in online retail. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 65, Article e102877. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102877>

- Gupta, S., Singh, A., & Prashar, S. (2026). Exploring the tapestry of the Technology Acceptance Model in retail through a bibliometric investigation. *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, 36(1), 216-244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09593969.2025.2584247>
- Habib, M. D., Alghamdi, A., Sharma, V., Mehrotra, A., & Badghish, S. (2024). Diet or lifestyle: Consumer purchase behavior of vegan retailing. A qualitative assessment. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 76, 103584. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2023.103584>
- Hänninen, M., Kwan, S. K., & Mitronen, L. (2021). From the store to omnichannel retail: looking back over three decades of research. *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, 31(1), 1–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09593969.2020.1833961>
- Harun, A., & Rokonzaman, M. (2021). Pursuit of loyalty in service recovery: the roles of brand equity and cognitive reappraisal as moderators. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 62, Article e102601. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102601>
- Hennink, M., & Kaiser, B. N. (2022). Sample sizes for saturation in qualitative research: A systematic review of empirical tests. *Social Science & Medicine*, 292, Article e114523. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114523>
- Hewett, F. (2021). *The future of UK retail: Digital acceleration beyond COVID-19*. Capgemini Research Institute. <https://www.capgemini.com/gb-en/insights/expert-perspectives/the-future-of-retail/>
- Hoque, F., Kamruzzaman, M., Rana, M. J., Hassan, M. K., & Hassan, J. (2022). Yield gap in bitter gourd production: A perspective of farm-specific efficiency in Narsingdi district in Bangladesh. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 6(1), 100335. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2022.103190>
- Huang, M. H., & Rust, R. T. (2025). Artificial intelligence, trust, and customer relationships in digital markets. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-024-00956-8>
- Huddleston, P., Coveyou, M. T., & Behe, B. K. (2023). Visual cues during shoppers' journeys: An exploratory paper. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 73, 103330.
- Jiang, Y., Wang, X., & Yuen, K. F. (2021). Augmented reality shopping application usage: The influence of attitude, value, and characteristics of innovation. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 63, 102720. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102720>
- Kallio, H., Pietilä, A.-M., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: Developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 72(12), 2954–2965. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13031>
- Kannan, P. K. (2017). Digital marketing: A framework, review and research agenda. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 34(1), 22–45.
- Karangara, J., & Manta, O. (2024). Consumer data protection and trust in digital retail ecosystems. *Information Systems Frontiers*, 26(1), 95–112. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-023-10392-7>
- Kolidakis, S., Kotoula, K. M., Botzoris, G., Kamberi, P. F., & Skoutas, D. (2024). Assessing impact factors that affect school mobility utilizing a machine learning approach. *Sustainability*, 16(2), 588. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16020588>
- Kotler, P., & Pfoertsch, W. (2007). Being known or being one of many: the need for brand management for business-to-business (B2B) companies. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 22(6), 357–362. <https://doi.org/10.1108/08858620710780118>
- Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Setiawan, I. (2021). *Marketing 5.0: Technology for humanity*. Wiley.
- Kou, G. (2021). Pandemic-induced consumer behaviour and online retail acceleration. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 46, Article e101027. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.elerap.2020.101027>
- Kraus, S., Durst, S., Ferreira, J. J. M., Veiga, P., Kailer, N., & Weinmann, A. (2022). Digital

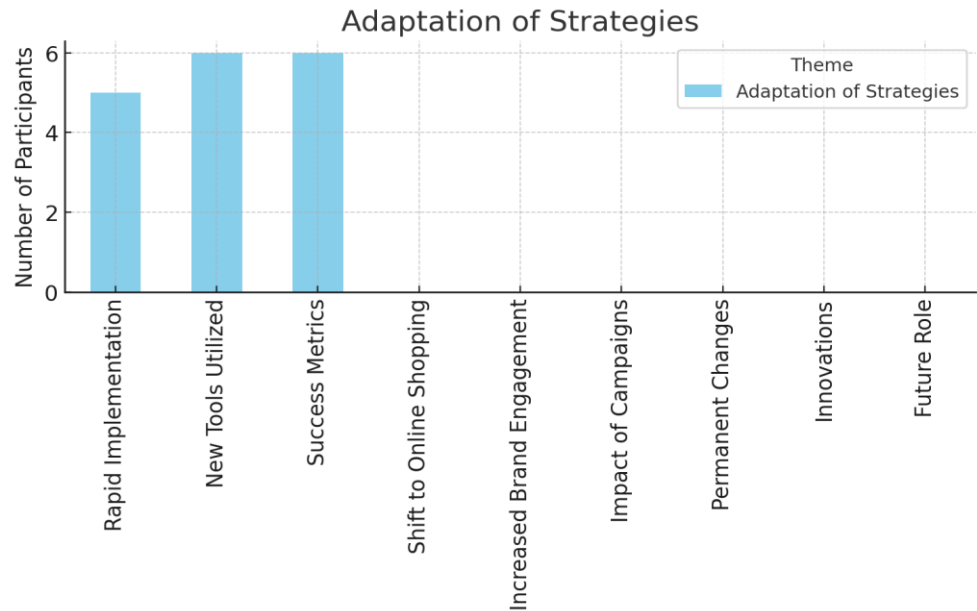
- transformation in business and management research: An overview of the current status quo. *International Journal of Information Management*, 63, Article e102466. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2021.102466>
- Kshetri, N. (2024). Generative AI: A game changer for marketing? *International Journal of Information Management*, 76, Article e102792. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0268-4012\(24\)00040-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0268-4012(24)00040-9)
- Kuckartz, U., & Rädiker, S. (2019). *Analyzing qualitative data with MAXQDA: Text, audio, and video*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-15671-8>
- Lee, A., Kumar, R., & Matsumoto, Y. (2025). Post-Pandemic Digital Adaptation Across Varied Industry Sectors. *Journal of Sustainability, Policy, and Practice*, 1(3), 291–300
- Lee, H., & Cho, C. H. (2023). Virtual brand experience in digital reality advertising: Conceptualization and measurement. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 22(2), 300–313. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.2126>
- Loo, P. (2025). Transfomation of Traditional Marketing Strategy to Digital; Challenges and Opportunities for Retailers. *Oikonomia: Journal of Management Economics and Accounting*, 2(2), 32–44.
- Mahdavi, A., Berger, C., Amin, H., Ampatzi, E., Andersen, R. K., Azar, E., Barthelmes, V. M., Favero, M., Hahn, J., Khovalyg, D., Knudsen, H. N., Luna-Navarro, A., Roetzel, A., Sangogboye, F. C., Schweiker, M., Taheri, M., Teli, D., Touchie, M., & Verbruggen, S. (2021). The Role of Occupants in Buildings' Energy Performance Gap: Myth or Reality? *Sustainability*, 13(6), 3146. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13063146>
- Mangalaraj, G., Nerur, S., & Dwivedi, R. (2023). Digital transformation for agility and resilience: An exploratory study. *Journal of Computer Information Systems*, 63(1), 11–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08874417.2021.2015726>
- Martin, K., Borah, A., & Palmatier, R. W. (2024). Data privacy, trust, and consumer engagement in digital markets. *Journal of Marketing*, 88(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429231212345>
- McKinsey & Company. (2020, July 17). The next normal in retail: Charting a path forward. McKinsey Global Institute. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/the-next-normal-in-retail-charting-a-path-forward>
- Meena, P., & Kumar, G. (2022). Online food delivery companies' performance and consumers expectations during Covid-19: An investigation using machine learning approach. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 68, 103052. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2022.103052>
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Meyers, M. C., van Woerkom, M., & Bauwens, R. (2023). Stronger together: A multilevel study of collective strengths use and team performance. *Journal of Business Research*, 159, 113728. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.113728>
- Micus, A., Nudurupati, S., & Tebboune, S. (2023). Big data analytics and strategic agility in retail digital transformation. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 189, Article e122324. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2023.122324>
- Mugo, D., Njagi, K., Chemwei, B., & Motanya, J. (2017). The technology acceptance model (TAM) and its application to the utilization of mobile learning technologies. *British Journal of Mathematics & Computer Science*, 20(4), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.9734/BJMCS/2017/29015>
- Nagarjuna, B., & Izhar, F. (2024). E-commerce evolution: Analyzing the impact of technology on retail strategies and consumer behavior. *Decision Making: Applications in Management and Engineering*, 7(1), 230–242.
- Nagel, C. (2020). Cybersecurity and consumer trust in e-commerce platforms. *Information & Computer Security*, 28(3), 465–480. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ICS-11-2019-0132>

- Nanda, P., Xu, Y., & Zhang, F. (2021). How COVID-19 disrupted retail supply chains and digital marketing strategies. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 61, Article e102521. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102521>
- Niewczas-Dobrowolska, M., Górka-Chowaniec, A., & Sikora, T. (2024). Retail resilience and digital adaptation during global crises. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 76, Article e103643. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2023.103643>
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- OECD. (2024). *E-commerce in the time of COVID-19*. OECD Publishing. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2020/10/e-commerce-in-the-time-of-covid-19_bb699f3a.html
- Office for National Statistics. (2026, January 23). *Internet sales as a percentage of total retail sales (ratio) (%)*. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/retailindustry/timeseries/j4mc/drsi>
- Okorie, U., Chima, C., & Kanu, S. (2024). Personalised digital marketing and customer experience in online retail. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 66, 47–63. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2023.10.004>
- Ologunbe, K. (2023). Strategic flexibility and digital decision-making in post-pandemic retail firms. *Management Decision*, 61(9), 2421–2440. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-10-2022-1374>
- Pantano, E., Pizzi, G., Scarpi, D., & Dennis, C. (2020). Competing during a pandemic? Retailers' ups and downs during the COVID-19 outbreak. *Journal of Business Research*, 116, 209–213. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.05.036>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Pearson, H., & Myall, M. (2025). The approach and application of analysing inductive and deductive datasets: A worked example using reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2025.2499265>
- Petkovic, G., Bogetić, Z., & Veljković, S. (2020). Website design and customer satisfaction in online retailing. *Economic Research—Ekonomika Istraživanja*, 33(1), 2305–2325. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1331677X.2020.1756376>
- Piersiala, L., & Kabus, J. (2023). Digital payments and cybersecurity risks in e-commerce. *Journal of Financial Crime*, 30(3), 846–861. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFC-05-2022-0112>
- Punchoojit, L., & Hongwarittorn, N. (2017). Usability studies on mobile user interface design patterns. *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies*, 11(4), 94–109. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijim.v11i4.6779>
- Rahman, A., Carlson, J., Gudergan, S. P., Wetzels, M., & Grewal, D. (2025). Capturing value in omnichannel customer experiences: A customer engagement perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 190, Article e115196. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2025.115196>
- Rahman, S. M., Carlson, J., & Chowdhury, N. H. (2022). SafeCX: A framework for safe customer experience in omnichannel retailing. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 36(4), 499–529
- Rahmanov, F., Mursalov, M., & Rosokhata, A. (2021). Consumer Behavior in Digital Era: Impact of COVID19. *Marketing and Management of Innovations*, 2, 243–251. <http://doi.org/10.21272/mmi.2021.2-20>
- Reinartz, W., Wiegand, N., & Imschloss, M. (2019). The impact of digital transformation on the retailing value chain. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 36(3), 350–366. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2018.12.002>
- Roggeveen, A. L., & Sethuraman, R. (2020). How the COVID-19 pandemic may change the world of retailing. *Journal of Retailing*, 96(2), 169–171. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2020.04.002>

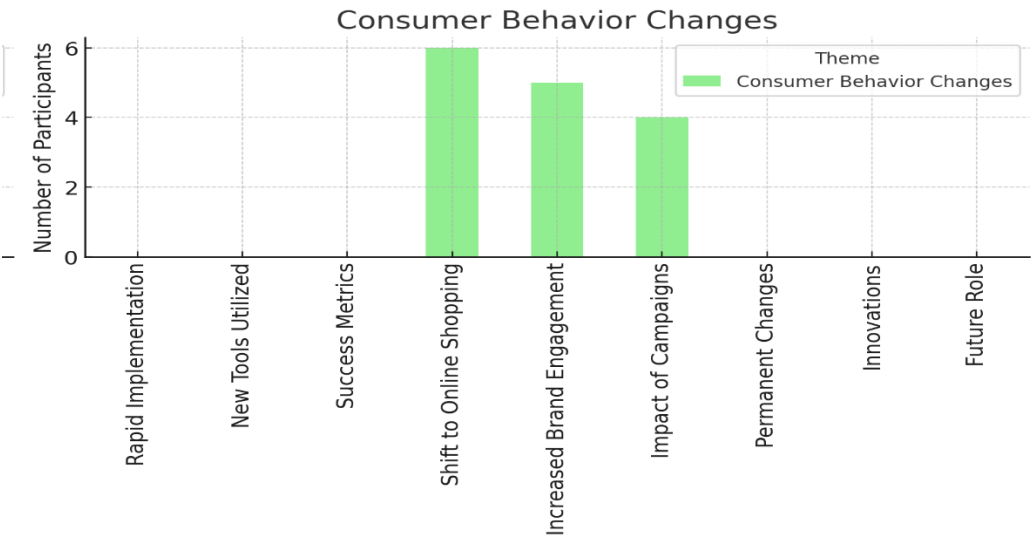
- Rose, S., Hair, N., & Clark, M. (2023). Digital resilience and marketing strategy in post-pandemic environments. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 39(13–14), 1205–1228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2023.2194025>
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research methods for business students* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Sheth, J. (2020). Impact of Covid-19 on consumer behavior: Will the old habits return or die? *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 280–283. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.05.059>
- Squire, C. M., Giombi, K. C., Rupert, D. J., Amoozegar, J., & Williams, P. (2024). Determining an appropriate sample size for qualitative interviews to achieve true and near code saturation: Secondary analysis of data. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 26, Article e52998. <https://doi.org/10.2196/52998>
- Strong, M., Goolsbee, A., & Yu, C. (2025). The impact of GDPR on online tracking and price discrimination: Evidence from the retail sector. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 42(1), 66–91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2024.05.002>
- Sun, Q., Wang, C., Zhou, Y., Zuo, L., & Song, H. (2023). How to build business ecosystems for e-waste online recycling platforms: a comparative study of two typical cases in China. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 190, 122440. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2023.122440>
- Szász, L., Demeter, K., & Rácz, B. G. (2022). Digital transformation and operational resilience in retail. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 42(9), 1347–1372. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOPM-03-2021-0182>
- Tasnim, K., Abdullah, M. S., Karim, M. Z., & Hasan, R. (2025). AI-Driven Innovation, Privacy Issues, and Gaining Consumer Trust: The Future of Digital Marketing. *Business and Social Sciences*, 3(1), 1–7.
- Teodorescu, A. M., Korchagina, E., & Stverkova, H. (2023). Digitalisation of retail marketing: Drivers and outcomes. *Sustainability*, 15(3), Article e2124. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15032124>
- Tornikoski, E., & Maalaoui, A. (2019). Critical reflections-The Theory of Planned Behaviour: An interview with Icek Ajzen with implications for entrepreneurship research. *International Small Business Journal*, 37(5), 536–550. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242619829681>
- Tueanrat, Y., Papagiannidis, S., & Alamanos, E. (2021). A conceptual framework of the antecedents of customer journey satisfaction in omnichannel retailing. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 61, 102550. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102550>
- Van Tonder, E., Fullerton, S., De Beer, L. T., & Saunders, S. G. (2023). Social and personal factors influencing green customer citizenship behaviours: The role of subjective norm, internal values and attitudes. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 71, 103190. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2022.103190>
- Verhoef, P. C., Broekhuizen, T., Bart, Y., Bhattacharya, A., Dong, J. Q., Fabian, N., & Haenlein, M. (2021). Digital transformation: A multidisciplinary reflection and research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 122, 889–901. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.09.022>
- Wang, X., Bart, Y., Netessine, S., & Wu, L. (2025). *Impact of multi-platform social media strategy on sales in e-commerce*. ArXiv Preprint. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2503.09083>
- Ward, M. (2025). *Retail sector in the UK* (House of Commons Library Research Briefing). House of Commons Library. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06186/>
- Zhang, L., Wu, L., Huang, L., & Zhang, Y. (2025). Will the power of omni-channel retailing strategy: a capability and supply chain resilience perspective. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 33(3), 416–440.

APPENDIX – A

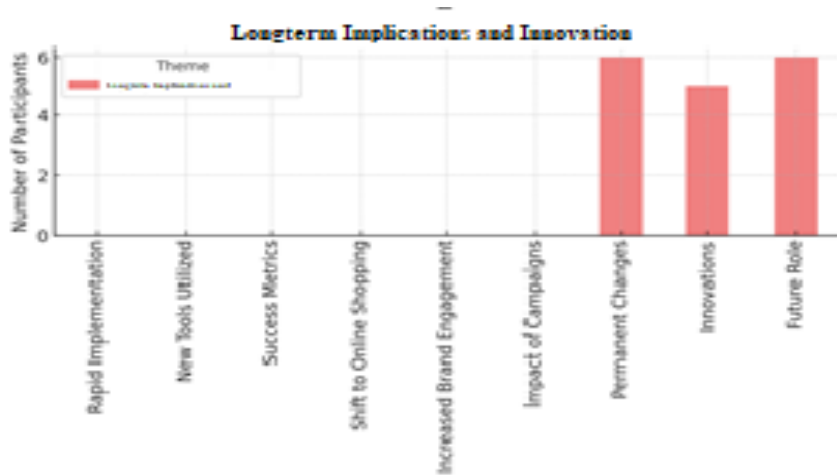
Adaptation of Strategies Graph



Consumer Behavior Changes Graph



Long-term Implications and Innovation



Overall Findings Graph

