

ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ / RESEARCH ARTICLE**CONSUMER COPING STRATEGIES WITHIN A SHOPPING CONTEXT DURING A PANDEMIC**

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has substantially transformed consumer behaviour and caused dramatic changes in individuals' shopping behaviour. During the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers developed various strategies to cope with uncertainty and stress. This study examines the coping strategies adopted by consumers in Türkiye during the pandemic within the context of shopping. The study focuses on the coping strategies preferred by consumers and the differences in these strategies related to consumers' demographic characteristics. In-depth interviews were conducted with 60 participants, and content analysis was used to analyse data. The findings show that participants adopted various coping mechanisms related to search process management, simplifying, deferral, planning and emotion-focused strategies, with the latter two being the most frequently adopted. In addition, demographic factors were found to play an important role in strategy preferences. This research provides theoretical contributions to the literature on consumer behaviour and to retail businesses seeking to develop strategies to meet consumer needs during crises.

Keywords: Coping strategies, COVID-19, Shopping, Qualitative research, QDA Miner.

Pandemi Sürecinde Tüketicilerin Alışveriş Bağlamında Geliştirdikleri Başa Çıkma Stratejileri

Öz

COVID-19 pandemisi, tüketici davranışlarını önemli ölçüde etkilemiş ve bireylerin alışveriş davranışlarında ciddi değişimlere neden olmuştur. Tüketiciler, pandemi süresince belirsizlik ve stresle başa çıkabilmek için çeşitli stratejiler geliştirmişlerdir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye’de tüketicilerin pandemi sürecinde benimsemiş oldukları alışveriş bağlamındaki başa çıkma stratejilerini incelemektedir. Çalışma, tüketicilerin hangi başa çıkma stratejilerini tercih ettiklerini ve bu stratejilerin demografik özellikler açısından ortaya çıkan farklılıklarına odaklanmaktadır. Çalışma kapsamında 60 katılımcı ile derinlemesine mülakatlar gerçekleştirilmiş ve veri analizinde içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, arama-süreç yönetimi, basitleştirme, erteleme, planlama ve duygusal odaklı stratejilerin tercih edilen başa çıkma yöntemleri olduğunu ve son iki stratejinin en sık başvurulanlar olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca, demografik faktörlerin strateji tercihlerinde önemli bir rol oynadığı belirlenmiştir. Bu araştırma, tüketici davranışları yazınına teorik katkılar sunmanın yanı sıra perakende sektöründeki işletmelere kriz dönemlerinde tüketici ihtiyaçlarına yönelik stratejiler geliştirme konusunda da yol gösterici niteliktedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Başa çıkma stratejileri, COVID-19, Alışveriş, Nitel araştırma, QDA Min

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic was one of the most significant global health crises of recent history, affecting billions of people globally. The virus, first detected in China in December 2019, spread worldwide and was declared a global pandemic in March 2020. The period from 2021 and early 2022 were the most severe years of the COVID-19 pandemic globally, marked by high case counts driven largely by the Delta variant in 2021 and the highly transmissible Omicron variant in late 2021–2022. As of May 21, 2023, over 766 million confirmed cases and over 6.9 million deaths have been reported globally by the WHO (World Health Organization, 2023^a). According to the Ministry of Health, Türkiye had recorded 17,232 million total confirmed COVID-19 cases and 102,170 deaths by March 2023 (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Health, 2023). As of May 2023, the WHO announced that COVID-19 no longer constitutes a public health emergency of international concern (World Health Organization, 2023^b).

The global health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was the catalyst for numerous changes in health systems and the daily lives of individuals worldwide, with particularly profound effects on consumer behaviour. During the pandemic, shopping habits also changed

dramatically due to lockdowns and social distancing measure. Consumers thus developed various coping strategies to deal with fear, uncertainty, and anxiety caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study aims to identify the coping mechanisms and strategies adopted by consumers in Türkiye during the COVID-19 pandemic to manage stress while shopping and to understand how their adoption differed across various demographic groups. While the current literature largely addresses coping strategies developed by individuals during times of crisis (health outbreaks, natural disasters, and economic downturns), it primarily examines these strategies through health-protective behaviours or changes in spending levels (e.g., Cherry, 2004; Lee-Baggley et al., 2004; Cheng & Tang, 2004; Filip, 2011). However, in the context of a pandemic, the specific coping strategies consumers adopt in response to uncertainty, stress, and fear during the shopping process are investigated separately, yet how these strategies differ according to demographic characteristics remain adequately explored. Particularly in the Turkish context, the lack of comprehensive, exploratory studies that examine consumer coping strategies specific to the shopping process in conjunction with demographic characteristics constitutes another research gap. Therefore, this study aims to fill the above-mentioned research gaps by contributing to the understanding of this once under-researched area.

Theoretical framework: This study primarily draws on the "Transactional Model of Stress and Coping" developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) to examine changes in consumer behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) model focuses on how people perceive and react to stressful events, emphasizing the role of cognitive appraisal and coping efforts. According to this theory, individuals first evaluate how threatening the situation is to them (primary appraisal), then analyse the adequacy of resources to cope with this threat (secondary appraisal). This two-stage appraisal process determines which coping strategy individuals choose: problem-focused or emotion-focused. In addition, this study draws on the framework proposed by Sujana et al. (1999), which examined coping strategies within the context of shopping, considering shopping as a stressful situation, and provided important insights for understanding how consumers cope with the challenges they face during the shopping process. According to Sujana et al. (1999), consumers adopt planning, searching and processing, simplifying, deferring, and emotion-focused coping strategies in a shopping context.

In this study, all consumer coping mechanisms and strategies adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic in a shopping context were first identified through a comprehensive literature review and then categorized according to the framework of Sujan et al. (1999). To identify shopping-related coping strategies adopted by Turkish consumers, this study was designed as a qualitative, exploratory study, and data were collected from 60 participants through in-depth interviews. The study's findings reveal shopping-specific coping strategies, grouping them into five categories, and suggest two new coping mechanisms. Accordingly, planning was the most frequently mentioned coping strategy as it includes a greater number of coping mechanisms, followed by emotion-focused, searching and processing, deferring, and simplifying strategies. This study identified two additional coping mechanisms, namely "deciding what to buy" and "purchasing from the first store visited," neither of which had been previously cited in the literature. Considering that the adoption of each coping strategy might vary depending on consumers' demographic characteristics, the study also reveals valuable findings based on gender, age, marital status, and the presence of children, which were not studied extensively in prior research.

This study contributes to theoretical understanding of consumer behaviour by integrating previously fragmented coping mechanisms into a coherent framework of coping strategies, highlighting demographic differences in the adoption of coping mechanisms and strategies, and recommending that retail businesses develop effective strategies for consumers during a pandemic.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Background of Consumer Coping

Developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the "Transactional Model of Stress and Coping" might be the most fundamental theory in psychology and consumer behaviour literature explaining how stress is perceived and managed through coping strategies. This model is called "transactional" because it views stress not merely as an external event or a purely biological response, but as a dynamic interaction between the individual and the environment. The essence of the model is that individuals first engage in a cognitive appraisal of the stressful situation and then develop coping strategies accordingly. A situation (e.g., an economic crisis, a natural disaster, or a pandemic) may not be equally stressful to everyone; therefore, when faced with

such situation, individuals engage in a two-stage cognitive appraisal. More specifically, individuals first engage in primary appraisal and determine whether the situation poses a threat to them. If it is perceived as threatening, individuals engage in a secondary appraisal by evaluating whether they have sufficient available resources (money, time, social support, knowledge, skills, etc.) to cope with the situation. When individuals perceive a threat and assess their resources, they develop specific coping strategies to manage stress.

Coping strategies are the mental and behavioural techniques people use to reduce stress in challenging situations. Folkman et al. (1986) divided coping strategies into two main categories: problem-focused and emotion-focused. With problem-focused coping, the aim is to confront the source of stress directly. Individuals who adopt this strategy identify the source of their problem, plan solutions, and actively take action to eliminate the stressful situation. In contrast, emotion-focused coping aims to understand the feelings associated with stress, rather than address its sources. This strategy includes methods such as alleviating negative emotions, trying to forget the stress, or reducing its impact by viewing the situation from a different perspective. For example, individuals may focus on relaxing activities that promote positive emotions to cope with a stressful situation. This is an iterative process; after implementing a coping strategy, individuals reassess the situation; if the strategy is successful, the stress level decreases; if the strategy fails, they seek a new coping strategy.

When examining coping strategies in the purchasing context, Sujan et al. (1999: 184) adapted Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) general psychological model directly to consumer behaviour by identifying various coping strategies arising from shopping-related stress. The authors identified various stress factors, including choice-related, use/consumption-related, disposal-related, time pressure, and in-store stress. Taking these specific stress factors associated with shopping into account, Sujan et al. (1999) detailed coping strategies, focusing on stress arising from choice. Accordingly, "planning (e.g., prioritizing and deciding what is needed), searching and processing (e.g., label reading, brand comparison, and price shopping), simplifying (e.g., picking the first option, using prior experiences, buying reputed brands only), deferring (e.g., postponing choice, cutting the shopping trip short), and emotion-focused (e.g., inhaling deeply, not going) coping strategies are identified for choice-related stress (Sujan et al., 1999, p. 190).

Coping strategies may vary depending on consumers' personal characteristics, psychological status, context, and consumer mindset (Hong et al., 2022). The global health crisis caused by

the COVID-19 pandemic has also been identified as a determinant of differing coping strategies in a shopping context, as consumers have resorted to various coping mechanisms, such as planning their shopping, adapting to technology, and managing negative emotions, to deal with the uncertainty and stress caused by the pandemic. During this period, various academic studies have been conducted to understand shopping-specific coping strategies, which will be presented in the next section.

2.2. Coping Strategies in Crisis Contexts: Health Outbreaks, Natural Disasters, and Economic Downturns

During times of global crisis, uncertainty creates psychological pressure, and it has been shown that emotions such as fear and anxiety fundamentally alter consumer behaviour, in contrast to rational decisions made during normal times (Hesham, Riadh, and Sihem, 2021). During the SARS outbreak, individuals were found to adopt strategies such as avoiding public spaces, taking preventative measures, relying on wishful thinking, seeking social support, and expressing empathy (Cherry, 2004; Lee-Baggley et al., 2004; Cheng & Tang, 2004). In addition, behaviours aimed at physical protection, such as mask use, increased handwashing frequency, improved indoor ventilation, and disinfection were widely observed (Lau et al., 2003; Tan et al., 2004). Studies concerning the H1N1 pandemic reveal that strategies such as information seeking, emotional regulation, and avoidance were common; moreover, problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping strategies are associated with risk perception and protective behaviours (Goodwin et al., 2011; McCauley et al., 2013; Bults et al., 2015).

In response to natural disasters (hurricanes, earthquakes, etc.), the loss of possessions and perceived lack of control increase stress and depression, triggering impulsive and compulsive buying behaviours (Sneath et al., 2009). Following Hurricane Katrina, consumers used consumption as a coping mechanism to regulate their emotional state, compensate for losses, and rebuild their self-image (Liu & Black, 2011). Similarly, following a major earthquake in New Zealand, consumption of utilitarian products aimed at survival increased in the initial phase, followed by a rise in the consumption of hedonistic and potentially harmful products to cope with stress and negative emotions (Forbes, 2017).

Economic crises prompt consumers to adopt more cautious, adaptive coping strategies in the face of financial uncertainty and income loss. It is noted that households adopt adaptive tactics,

such as buying fewer and cheaper goods and shifting towards durable products, during economic crises (Gärling et al., 2009). During crisis periods, consumers become more price-focused, turn to discount stores, and avoid impulsive purchases (Filip, 2011). A study conducted in Mexico showed that women tended to use more emotion-focused and avoidant strategies, while men gravitated towards planned problem-solving (Castano et al., 2011).

While the existing literature comprehensively addresses coping strategies developed by individuals during crises, these strategies are mostly examined through the lens of health-related protective behaviours or changes in spending levels. Studies on pandemics focus on physical protection and risk-avoidance behaviours, while addressing consumers' decision-making and selection mechanisms within the shopping process to a limited extent. In the context of natural disasters and economic crises, consumption increases or decreases are highlighted; however, specific coping strategies during shopping under uncertainty and stress are not sufficiently explained. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the coping strategies consumers adopt during the shopping process during a pandemic.

2.3. Consumer Coping Strategies During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were substantial, extending beyond health to significantly alter consumer behaviour. While the COVID-19 pandemic reshaped consumers' shopping patterns, many engaged in various coping strategies to manage uncertainty, stress, and fear related to COVID-19 health threats. For instance, hoarding and stockpiling essential products such as food, cleaning supplies, and hygiene products have been cited as among the most commonly practiced shopping-related coping behaviours (e.g., Borges et al., 2023; Han et al., 2024; Papagiannidis et al., 2023; Rahardjo et al., 2023; Rayburn et al., 2022; Sheth, 2020; Singh et al., 2023; Sohani & Fahmy, 2020; Valaskova et al., 2021; Zielke et al., 2023). Shamim et al. (2021) also found that, in the early stages of the pandemic, consumers made fewer trips to grocery stores, made shopping lists to guide their purchases, prioritized speed and efficiency while shopping, and increasingly selected packaged food items and explored new brands. According to Schmidt et al. (2021), a high perceived risk of COVID-19 was associated with reduced shopping frequency, especially among females, and with increased quantities of goods purchased per shopping trip.

On the other hand, Grashuis et al. (2020) focused on the importance of delivery and pickup windows, revealing that shorter delivery times could enhance consumer satisfaction. Consumers' prioritization of essential products over non-essential ones (Rayburn et al., 2022) and reduced purchases of non-essential products (Gordon-Wilson, 2022) appeared to be another way of dealing with the uncertainty and stress caused by the pandemic. These studies collectively show that planning was closely related to coping strategies in a shopping context, including deciding what to buy, deciding how many items to purchase, deciding whether to stockpile, deciding on the shopping time, preparing a shopping list, and prioritizing purchases.

The shopping behaviour of consumers showed significant changes during the COVID-19 pandemic, considering information seeking and processing. Adoption of digital technologies, use of mobile applications, comparison of product features, and discovery of new shopping channels (e.g., online shopping, door-to-door delivery) have been key strategies for consumers (Moon et al., 2021; Sheth, 2020; Grashuis et al., 2020). In their study, Gustafsson and Yanzhuo (2021) found that consumers developed habits of searching and comparing online before making an expensive, irregular purchase.

Another coping strategy consumers demonstrated throughout the pandemic was to simplify their shopping decisions. Sohani and Fahmy (2020) found that consumers changed their preferred brands only when their preferred brands were unavailable and avoided purchasing new brands. Similarly, Gustafsson and Yanzhuo (2021) found that some respondents preferred to stick with the brand they were familiar with and satisfied with. This result was also reported in the study by Mende et al. (2023), which found that as consumers limited their store time, they were more inclined to select brands they were familiar with and devoted less time to finding deals and alternative products.

As Zulauf and Wagner (2022) noted, shopping can be a self-rewarding act that distracts one from negative feelings. Likewise, Rahardjo et al. (2023) indicated that individuals viewed shopping as a self-reward for past or present hardships. Examining consumer coping behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic from a fashion shopping perspective, Han et al. (2024) revealed that "self-indulgence" was one of the emotional coping mechanisms used by consumers to care for themselves and enjoy life. In addition to this, impulsive shopping, defined as consumers' unexpected, unprompted, and unintended behaviour to purchase goods, resulting in fast decision-making and immediate ownership (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991), increased

during the pandemic and has been revealed by various researchers that this shopping type was an alternative way to cope with negative emotions. Studies revealed that the uncertainty and fear caused by the pandemic led individuals to alleviate their negative emotions by engaging in impulsive shopping (Ahmed et al., 2020; Naeem, 2021). The isolation experienced during the pandemic also paved the way for individuals to turn to pleasure-oriented consumption and shopping, especially for entertainment purposes (Koch et al., 2020).

When the literature was reviewed to identify which demographic characteristics shape the selection of consumer coping strategies, various studies were found; however, those investigated within a shopping context appear to be very few. Schmidt et al. (2021) associated reduced shopping frequency with females. Related to stockpiling, evidence from Japan indicates that during the COVID-19 pandemic, women with larger families stockpiled only slightly more than usual (Nakano et al., 2022). Expressed as a similar term to stockpiling, overpurchasing during the pandemic was found to be associated with younger age, being female, having children at home, and higher income (Bentall et al., 2021). Rahardjo et al. (2023) found that females show a higher propensity for emotion-driven and compulsive buying. Agrawal (2023) found that younger generations tend to seek information and use innovative technologies, such as shopping platforms and applications.

In the literature, coping strategies in the shopping context during the COVID-19 pandemic have been widely investigated, yet in a scattered, disorganized manner. The authors develop Table 1 to show which coping mechanisms that emerged during the pandemic fall under the coping strategies identified by Sujan et al. (1999). Accordingly, while planning and deferral strategies are the most notable research areas in the literature, searching, processing, simplifying, and emotion-based strategies have been the subject of fewer academic studies. Additionally, the majority of these studies address coping strategies at a descriptive level and focus primarily on a single strategy. This situation provides a limited explanation of how consumers' coping strategies developed during the shopping process in response to pandemic-induced uncertainty, fear, and stress. Furthermore, consumer coping strategies are not systematically examined in terms of demographic characteristics in the literature. Although existing studies partially address variables such as gender or age in some of their findings, no study has been found that examines how pandemic-driven coping for shopping differs across a broader spectrum of demographics, including gender, age, education, marital status, and the presence of children.

Table 1: Consumer Coping Within a Shopping Context Based on Sujan et al.’s (1999) Study

COPING STRATEGIES	COPING MECHANISMS	PREVIOUS STUDIES
PLAN	Decided on the quantity of my purchase	Schmidt et al. (2021)
	Stockpiled	Baltacı and Akaydın (2020); Sheth (2020); Sohani & Fahmy (2020); Valaskova et al. (2021); Güney and Sangün (2021); Belbağ (2022); Rayburn et al. (2022); Borges et al. (2023); Singh et al. (2023); Papagiannidis et al. (2023); Rahardjo et al. (2023); Zielke et al. (2023); Han et al. (2024); Kuş, Bayhan & Deniz (2026)
	Decided on the shopping time	Grashuis et al. (2020)
	Prepared shopping list	Shamim et al., (2021)
	Prioritized my purchases	Rayburn et al. (2022); Gordon-Wilson (2022)
SEARCH - PROCESS	Compared products-brands	Gustafsson & Yanzhuo (2021); Agrawal (2023)
	Used new applications	Moon et al. (2021); Sheth (2020), Grashuis et al. (2020)
SIMPLIFY	Preferred familiar brands	Gustafsson & Yanzhuo (2021); Sohani & Fahmy (2020); Mende et al. (2023)
DEFER	Not staying long in the store (i.e., shopping quickly)	Shamim, Ahmad & Alam (2021); Mende et al. (2023)
	Delayed the shopping (i.e., reduced frequency of shopping)	Sohani & Fahmy (2020); Valaskova et al., (2021); Shamim, Ahmad & Alam (2021); Schmidt et al. (2021); Moon et al. (2021); Belbağ (2022).
EMOTION-FOCUSED	Spoiled myself (self-indulgence)	Zulauf & Wagner (2022); Han et al. (2024)
	Impulsive/compulsive shopping	Ahmed et al. (2020); Koch et al. (2020); Naeem (2021); Çelik and Köse (2021); Küçükkambak and Süler (2022).

2.4. Consumer Coping in Türkiye during the COVID-19 Pandemic

In Türkiye, one of the countries that was deeply affected by the pandemic, numerous studies have examined changes in consumer behaviour after COVID-19. In studies focusing on the early stages of the pandemic, coping through stockpiling stands out, especially in the context of food consumption. Studies have highlighted stockpiling as an important coping strategy for consumers (Baltacı & Akaydın, 2020; Güney & Sangün, 2021). Çelik and Köse (2021) analysed the effect of stress and anxiety experienced during the early stages of the pandemic on individuals' coping style with stress and the impact of this coping style on compulsive buying behaviour. During the same period, Çiçek and Muzaffaer's study (2021) found that online shopping was preferred to avoid crowded physical stores.

Reviewing national studies on changing consumer behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic identified a few that addressed consumer coping in detail. For instance, Belbağ (2022) found that in Türkiye, consumers adopted mechanisms such as avoiding physical stores, reducing leisure activities, decreasing shopping frequency, stockpiling, and cautious consumption during the adaptation to the "new normal". Küçükkambak and Süler (2022) examined the relationship between the fear of COVID-19 and compulsive buying behaviour among consumers. They found that impulsive buying behaviour mediated the effect of fear of COVID-19 on compulsive buying behaviour. In another study, fear of COVID-19 was also found to predict perceived product benefits (Altay, 2023). A recent study on consumer coping examined post-COVID-19 stockpiling behaviour by analysing how personality traits and consumption motivations relate, as well as the mediating roles of hedonic and utilitarian consumption (Kuş, Bayhan, and Deniz, 2026). The authors found that utilitarian consumption significantly mediated the relationship between conscientiousness and stockpiling, suggesting that highly conscientious individuals stockpile for practical, goal-driven reasons.

A thorough examination of the literature on consumer coping has shown that, while the COVID-19 pandemic in the Turkish context comprehensively addressed changes in consumer behaviour, it did not holistically examine the coping strategies consumers develop during the shopping process. Existing studies have mostly focused on coping strategies such as stockpiling, impulsive/compulsive buying, or delaying shopping; however, they have not explained which coping mechanisms shape consumers' shopping behaviour.

3. Methodology

This research is a qualitative study that aims to explore the shopping-related coping strategies adopted by consumers during the pandemic and to examine how they differ by demographic characteristics. The main rationale for selecting a qualitative approach is the need to understand consumers' complex, subjective coping mechanisms by going in-depth into their experiences. As Creswell and Poth (2018) argue, qualitative techniques are well-suited to analyse how individuals shape the social reality and how they assign meanings to their experiences. In that manner, the diverse feelings individuals go through cannot be reflected by the numerical values (such as spending patterns or even attitude scales); the probing needs to be done in terms of understanding the contextual conditions, like why and how. Patton (2015) similarly states that qualitative research is the most appropriate research approach for revealing the complexity and depth of lived experiences. Another rationale is the unique and novel role of the pandemics, which globally affected everyone's daily lives; hence, the research demands going beyond the existing scope and scale of coping mechanisms, which requires an inductive method to uncover new mechanisms.

The research questions are as follows:

- What are the shopping-specific coping strategies adopted by consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Do these coping strategies differ according to demographic characteristics?

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to address the research questions, facilitating a flexible yet focused understanding of the participants' coping mechanisms. As one of the major qualitative data collection methods, in-depth interviews enable respondents to express their experiences, feelings, and reasoning in their own way, and provide a venue for researchers to follow a flow of probing questions to explore themes for each research question. Although qualitative studies employing in-depth interviews often involve smaller samples, there are two main reasons for adopting a wider audience. First, as proposed by Eriksson and Kovalainen (2018), a large sample size provides greater "evidentiary adequacy" and captures a wider range of coping mechanisms. Second, since one of our research questions focused on detecting demographic differences, we ensured that substantial data were collected from a more diverse sample across different age groups, genders, and socio-economic backgrounds. In that manner, following the code of reaching theoretical saturation, data collection and extending the

sample size continued until no new mechanisms and themes emerged across different participant groups.

A semi-structured interview guide was developed with four main sections, including 13 thematic questions and four demographic questions. The first section covered warm-up questions (Did any of your relatives get sick? Who were they?). In contrast, the second section focused on the psychology of the respondents (What was/were the most intense emotion(s) you experienced during and after the quarantine period?). The third section aimed to reveal the effects of the experienced emotions on shopping behavior (Did your thoughts and emotions during this period change your shopping behavior? In what ways did your shopping behaviour change? What did you start doing differently?). The final section centered on whether shopping-related mechanisms affected consumers' emotional states (Which of the methods worked best for you? Did your uncertainty, anxiety, and stress decrease? Did you feel better overall?). For each section, probing questions were also asked when necessary. All codes related to coping mechanisms were identified after three researchers read the transcriptions multiple times and reached consensus. Data were analysed using the QDA Miner 6 software program.

To maintain social distancing, interviews were conducted via Zoom software program from March to April 2022. The timing of data collection in 2022 was a conscious choice, as it fell during a period when the acute phase of the pandemic had largely passed. However, its social, psychological, and behavioural effects were still evident. This timing allowed participants to evaluate their shopping experiences during the pandemic not only through immediate or panic-driven reactions, but also from a more reflective perspective. Interviews lasted an average of 40 minutes and were recorded and transcribed by the researchers.

The convenience sampling method was employed to ensure demographic diversity, a balanced distribution of age, gender, and socio-economic status. Additionally, participants' willingness to articulate their psychological and shopping-related experiences during the pandemic were highly prioritized. In total, 60 participants were interviewed, and recruitment continued until theoretical saturation was deemed to have been reached (Guest et al., 2006). The sample characteristics are presented in Table 2. Accordingly, 67% of the sample was female, 25% were between 17 and 30 years old, 20% were between 31 and 40 years old, 23% were between 41 and 50 years old, and 32% were 51 years and older. The majority of the participants were university graduates (45%). The marital status of the participants was evenly balanced, with

almost half of the sample (48%) having no children, 37% having one child, and 15% having two children. Additionally, Table 3 provides a detailed examination of sample characteristics.

Table 2: Distribution of Participants by Demographic Variables

		Count (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	40	67%
	Male	20	33%
Age groups	17-30	15	25%
	31-40	12	20%
	41-50	14	23%
	51 and older	19	32%
Education	High School	10	16%
	Bachelor's Degree	27	45%
	Post-Graduate Degree	23	38%
Marital Status	Single	30	50%
	Married	30	50%
Number of Children	No Children	29	48%
	One Child	22	37%
	Two children and more	9	15%

Table 3: Sample Characteristics

PARTICIPANT ID	GENDER	AGE	EDUCATION	MARITAL STATUS	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
1	F	18	High School	Single	0
2	F	18	High School	Single	0
3	F	18	High School	Single	0
4	F	18	High School	Single	0
5	F	18	High School	Single	0
6	M	18	High School	Single	0
7	M	18	High School	Single	0
8	M	18	High School	Single	0
9	M	18	High School	Single	0
10	F	22	Bachelor's	Single	0
11	M	22	Bachelor's	Single	0
12	M	22	Master	Single	0
13	M	28	Bachelor's	Single	0

14	F	28	Master	Single	0
15	F	30	Bachelor's	Married	1
16	F	31	PhD	Married	0
17	F	32	Master	Single	0
18	M	33	Master	Married	1
19	F	35	PhD	Single	0
20	F	37	PhD	Married	2
21	M	38	Bachelor's	Married	2
22	F	38	PhD	Single	0
23	F	38	Master	Single	0
24	F	39	PhD	Married	1
25	M	40	PhD	Married	1
26	M	40	Bachelor's	Married	1
27	M	40	Bachelor's	Single	1
28	F	41	Bachelor's	Single	1
29	F	41	Bachelor's	Married	1
30	F	41	Master	Married	1
31	F	41	Bachelor's	Married	2
32	M	42	PhD	Married	0
33	F	42	Bachelor's	Single	0
34	F	42	Bachelor's	Single	1
35	M	42	PhD	Single	0
36	F	45	PhD	Married	2
37	F	45	Bachelor's	Married	2
38	F	48	Secondary School	Married	4
39	M	49	PhD	Married	1
40	M	50	Bachelor's	Single	0
41	F	50	Bachelor's	Married	1
42	F	51	PhD	Married	1
43	F	53	Bachelor's	Single	1
44	F	54	Bachelor's	Married	0
45	M	54	Master	Married	1
46	F	54	Master	Married	2
47	F	55	Master	Single	1
48	F	55	Bachelor's	Married	2
49	F	55	Bachelor's	Married	2
50	F	56	PhD	Single	0

51	M	56	Bachelor's	Married	1
52	F	57	Bachelor's	Married	1
53	F	60	Bachelor's	Married	0
54	M	62	Bachelor's	Married	1
55	F	64	Bachelor's	Married	0
56	F	66	Master	Single	1
57	F	55+	Bachelor's	Single	0
58	F	60+	Master	Married	1
59	M	60+	Bachelor's	Married	0
60	F	65+	Bachelor's	Single	1

4. Findings

The findings of the study are presented under three main headings. First, findings on shopping-specific coping mechanisms are presented. Then, coping mechanisms are grouped into strategies, and the prevalence of each strategy is presented. The final part provides a further analysis of whether there are significant differences in coping strategies across demographic characteristics.

4.1. Shopping-Related Coping Mechanisms

To understand the variety of coping mechanisms adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic, participants were asked what they did in the context of shopping. Probing questions were also asked to uncover how they dealt with the pandemic when necessary. Figure 1 provides the word cloud of the participants' responses. The font size of the concept symbolizes the frequency with which it was mentioned. Accordingly, "spoiled myself", "decided on the shopping time," and "used new applications" are the most noticeable coping mechanisms adopted by the participants.



Figure 1: Shopping Related Coping Mechanisms' Word Cloud

Note. Created by the authors via the QDA Miner 6 software program.

As shown in Figure 1, the most prominent coping mechanism is "spoiled myself," which was mentioned 50 times (10.9% of the codes) by 49 participants (81.7% of the sample). The other three most adopted mechanisms are "decided on the shopping time" (count=37, 8.1%; n=49, 81.7%), "used new shopping applications" (count=37, 8.1%; n=32, 53.3%), and "preferred familiar brands" (count=28, 6.1%; n=28, 46.7%).

As the "spoiled myself" coping mechanism had the highest frequency, it needed further examination. Throughout the interviews, the interviewers probed the participants' spoiling style by asking which categories they referred to. The participants indicated diverse ways they spoiled themselves, such as "I bought food to treat myself: waffles, hamburgers... I ate whatever I wanted!" (Female, aged 18). In addition, apparel shopping stood out in another way that participants stated, for instance, "To make myself feel better, I bought a lot of clothes. Even though no one else would see them, since we were locked down at home, I still bought them. I think I did it because it gave me a psychological boost." (Female, aged 38). Two other participants similarly stated:

"I bought many things to spoil myself, and I used everything I bought. ... It might be expensive, but I got my money's worth out of it. Lately, I've bought technological products, and I'm using them. I might have bought some unnecessarily expensive and silly Formula 1-related clothes, but I wear them all." (Male, aged 22)

“I treated myself to some nice books, and I also got some for my daughter. Board games were another fun purchase, and they've been great for us to enjoy our time. My audiobook membership feels like a real treat, and I'm finding myself listening a lot more. Digital platform memberships, in general, feel like rewards to me. I got an Amazon Prime membership during the pandemic. Overall, the things I've bought for myself lately focused on making our time at home more enjoyable and of higher quality.” (Female, aged 41)

Figure 2 presents the products or experiences that consumers purchased to spoil or reward themselves. Apparel emerged as the most prominent, mentioned by 15 participants (25%), followed by food and beverage, mentioned by 11 participants (18.3%), and technological products, mentioned by 9 participants (15%).



Figure 2: “Spoiled Myself with...” Word Cloud

Note. Created by the authors via the QDA Miner 6 software program.

Consumers adopted various coping mechanisms; however, the authors believe this range may pose a challenge for understanding the true nature of consumer psychology. Therefore, each coping mechanism was coded and analysed separately, the three researchers reached consensus on grouping these mechanisms into strategies, in line with Sujan's (1999) study on coping strategies for choice stress. Sujan (1999) identified five major themes as coping strategies: "plan", "search and process", "simplify", "defer", and "emotion-focused". The same strategies were adopted; however, the mechanisms underlying each were adapted to the COVID-19 coping strategies in the shopping context.

Table 4 presents the frequency of the coded mechanisms under each shopping-related coping strategy. Cases (=n) refer to the number of participants mentioning a mechanism. Count refers to the total number of times a mechanism is mentioned; i.e., each participant might have referred

to a mechanism multiple times across different sections of the interview. That explains why the counts exceed the sample size. As can be observed from Table 4, "spoiled myself", "decided on the shopping time", and "used new applications" appear to be the most cited coping mechanisms, whereas "prioritized my purchases", "decided what to buy", and "decided on the quantity of my purchase" are the least cited.

When each mechanism was grouped under the relevant coping strategy, findings reveal that participants adopted the "emotion-focused" (n=51, 85%), "plan" (n=44, 73.3%), "search-process" (n=42, 70%), "defer" (n=32, 53.3%), and "simplify" (n=30, 50%) coping strategies in descending order. It was observed that emotion-focused coping was the strategy cited by the highest number of participants (85%). On the other hand, "plan" is the most often cited coping strategy (count=89, 19.04%) as it incorporates a greater number of coping mechanisms, followed by emotion-focused (count=72, 15.07%), search-process (count =63, 13.07%), defer (count =48, 10.05%), and simplify (count =34, 7.04%).

Table 4: Coping Strategies and Mechanisms

Strategy	Coping Mechanism	Count	% of Codes	Count	% of Codes*	Cases	% of Cases**
Emotion-Focused	Spoiled myself	50	10,90 %	72	15.07%	51	85%
	Impulsive/compulsive shopping	22	4,80%				
Plan	Decided on the shopping time	37	8,10%	89	19.04%	44	73.3%
	Prepared shopping list	24	5,20%				
	Stockpiled	17	3,70%				
	Decided what to buy	4	0,90%				
	Decided on the quantity of my purchase	4	0,90%				
	Prioritized my purchases	3	0,70%				
Search-Process	Used new applications	37	8,10%	63	13.07%	42	70%
	Compared products-brands	26	5,70%				
Simplify	Preferred familiar brands	28	6,10%	34	7.04%	30	50%
	Purchased from the first store visited	6	1,30%				

Defer	Delayed the shopping	24	5,20%	48	10.05%	32	53.3%
	Not stayed long in the store	24	5,20%				

Note. *%of these codes with respect to all codes; **% of these cases/participants with respect to all cases/participants. Created by the authors.

4.2. Demographic Differences in Coping Strategies

The last research question focused on identifying demographic differences in these shopping-specific coping strategies. The analysis was carried out by taking the counts of the coping strategies into account, i.e., how many times the coping strategy was mentioned by the participants, rather than the number of cases (participants) adopting the coping strategy. The findings indicated that substantial differences exist by gender, age group, marital status, and the presence of children, while no remarkable differences were observed by education level.

4.2.1 Gender

Shopping-related coping strategies were first analysed according to gender. As presented in Table 5, both genders preferred “plan” as the most frequently adopted coping strategy. Additionally, Figure 3 indicates that “plan” is slightly more adopted by males than females (30,2% of males, 28.6 % of females), whereas “emotion-focused” is the second preferred coping strategy in both genders, however, it was more prevalent among females than males (24,8% of the females, 20.8 % of the males). On the other hand, while “search-process” appears to be somewhat equally preferred by both genders, “simplify” was adopted more frequently by males, whereas “defer” was adopted more frequently by females.

Table 5: Shopping-Related Coping Strategies’ Frequencies According to Gender

Shopping-Related Coping Strategies	Male	Female
PLAN	30.2%	28.6%
SEARCH-PROCESS	21.9%	20.0%
SIMPLIFY	13.5%	10.0%
DEFER	13.5%	16.7%
EMOTION-FOCUSED	20.8%	24.8%

Note. Created by the authors via the QDA Miner 6 software program.



Figure 3: Shopping-Related Coping Strategies Bubble Charts According to Gender
Note. Created by the authors via the QDA Miner 6 software program.

4.2.2. Age groups

Age was grouped into 17-30, 31-40, 41-50, and 51+ years. Table 6 reveals that the youngest generation most frequently adopted the "emotion-focused" coping strategy (34%), whereas the remaining age groups most often used the "plan" coping strategy (30.7%, 28%, 32.4%, respectively). According to Figure 4, "search process" and "simplify" do not seem to differ across age groups; however, "defer" is more prominent in the 41-50 age group (23,4%) than in other groups, suggesting a tendency to avoid shopping.

Table 6: Shopping-Related Coping Strategies’ Frequencies According to Age Groups

Shopping-Related Coping Strategies	17-30	31-40	41-50	51+
PLAN	24.5%	30.7%	28.0%	32.4%
SEARCH-PROCESS	18.9%	22.7%	21.5%	18.3%
SIMPLIFY	11.3%	10.7%	11.2%	11.3%
DEFER	11.3%	14.7%	23.4%	8.5%
EMOTION-FOCUSED	34.0%	21.3%	15.9%	29.6%

Note. Created by the authors via the QDA Miner 6 software program.

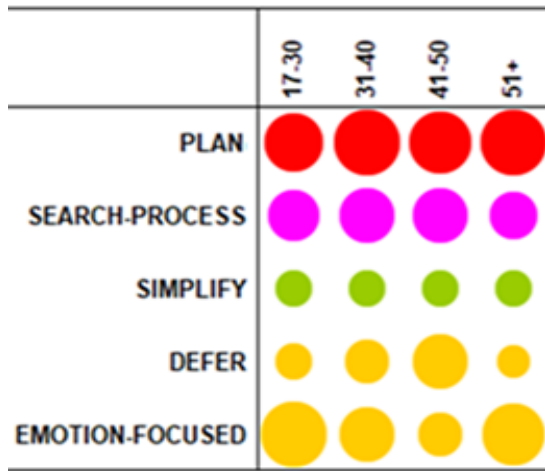


Figure 4: Shopping-Related Coping Strategies Bubble Charts According to Age Groups
Note. Created by the authors via the QDA Miner 6 software program.

4.2.3. Marital status

According to Table 7, "plan" emerged again as the most frequently preferred coping strategy in both the single and married groups (29.4% of single participants, 28.8% of married participants). However, as shown in Figure 5, the second most frequent coping strategy, among single group, was more "emotion-focused" (26.6%) than among the married group (20.9%). In contrast, the married group preferred the "search-process" coping strategy (23.3%) more than single participants (17.5%).

Table 7: Shopping-Related Coping Strategies' Frequencies According to Marital Status

Shopping-related Coping Strategies	Single	Married
PLAN	29.4%	28.8%
SEARCH-PROCESS	17.5%	23.3%
SIMPLIFY	11.2%	11.0%
DEFER	15.4%	16.0%
EMOTION-FOCUSED	26.6%	20.9%

Note. Created by the authors via the QDA Miner 6 software program.



Figure 5: Shopping-Related Coping Strategies Bubble Charts According to Marital Status
Note. Created by the authors via the QDA Miner 6 software program.

4.2.4. Presence of children

Another analysis was performed to determine whether the presence of children changed the coping strategy adopted during COVID-19. Table 8 revealed that participants with children used a “plan” coping strategy more (32.7%) than the group without children (24.4%). On the other hand, participants without children used the “emotion-focused” coping strategy more often (28.1 %) than the group with children (19.9%). The difference can also be observed in Figure 6. The remaining coping strategies do not differ much between those with children and those without.

Table 8: Shopping-Related Coping Strategies' Frequencies for the Presence of Children

Shopping-Related Coping Strategies	YES	NO
PLAN	32.7%	24.4%
SEARCH-PROCESS	20.5%	20.7%
SIMPLIFY	11.7%	10.4%
DEFER	15.2%	16.3%
EMOTION-FOCUSED	19.9%	28.1%

Note. Created by the authors via the QDA Miner 6 software program.



Figure 6: Shopping-Related Coping Strategies Bubble Charts for the Presence of the Children
Note. Created by the authors via the QDA Miner 6 software program.

5. Discussion

This study explores the coping strategies adopted by Turkish consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic and suggests that these strategies may differ across demographic characteristics. The findings reveal that consumers actively coped with the pandemic by developing search-process, simplification, deferral, planning, and emotion-focused strategies to manage uncertainty, stress, and fear. Previous literature in crisis contexts has not examined shopping-related coping strategies as comprehensively as the present study, making this study a valuable contribution.

The present study finds that all coping mechanisms identified previously in the COVID-19 literature were also adopted in an emerging country such as Türkiye, including deciding on the quantity of purchased items (Schmidt et al., 2021), stockpiling (e.g. Sheth 2020; Valaskova et al., 2021; Çelik and Kartal, 2022; Borges et al. 2023; Rahardjo et al., 2023; Kuş et al., 2026), deciding on the shopping time (Grashuis et al., 2020), preparing a shopping list (Shamim et al., 2021), prioritizing (Gordon-Wilson, 2022; Rayburn et al., 2022), comparing products and brands (Agrawal, 2023; Gustafsson and Yanzhuo, 2021), using shopping applications (e.g. Grashuis et al., 2020; Moon et al., 2021), preferring familiar brands (e.g. Gustafsson and Yanzhuo, 2021; Mende et al., 2023), not staying long in the store (Shamim et al., 2021; Mende et al., 2023), reducing the number of visits to stores (e.g. Sohani and Fahmy, 2020; Moon et al., 2021; Belbağ, 2022), spoiling oneself (Zulauf and Wagner, 2022; Han et al., 2024) and engaging in impulsive shopping (e.g. Ahmed et al., 2020; Koch et al., 2020; Naeem, 2021). In addition to these, two new coping mechanisms were identified: "deciding what to buy" as a pre-

planning effort and "purchasing from the first store visited" as a simplification effort, revealing the rational and practical coping strategies that consumers developed during the pandemic.

This study offers a unique perspective by mapping individual coping mechanisms to their parent strategies and ranking them by how frequently they were reported in the sample group. When examined in terms of number of participants reporting each mechanism, participants preferred "spoiled myself" as the most frequently preferred coping mechanism. Self-rewarding via shopping is not a recent phenomenon, especially in uncertain times (Han et al., 2024; Koch et al., 2020; Rahardjo et al., 2023; Zulauf & Wagner, 2022). Additionally, Turkish consumers across a range of socio-economic backgrounds engaged in impulsive shopping throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, consistent with the literature (Ahmed et al., 2020; Naeem, 2021). Consumers who state self-spoiling or engage in impulsive shopping as coping mechanisms indicate that consumers' emotional motivations might outweigh rational and financial considerations, leading them to prioritize keeping themselves busy over critical health consequences or restrictions. In particular, the dominance of emotion-focused coping strategies and the adoption of "spoiled myself" and "engaging in impulsive/compulsive shopping" as the prominent coping mechanisms during the pandemic reveal that hedonic tendencies in consumer behaviour may become more pronounced during crisis periods. Hence, this study supports the notion that consumers' emotional side of shopping served as a way to alleviate negative feelings or mood, unlike other research findings, which highlighted the prioritization of compulsory items and the elimination of unnecessary spending items as departing from emotional shopping (Gordon-Wilson, 2022; Rayburn et al., 2022). When consumers were asked which categories they purchased most for spoiling themselves, apparel, food and beverage, and technological products emerged as the most frequently purchased, reflecting both hedonic and utilitarian needs.

Considering how many times the coping mechanisms were mentioned, "spoiled myself" was found to be the most popular coping mechanism. However, when examining coping strategies, "plan" was the most commonly adopted. Consumers leaned towards the emotional act of self-gratification as a single mechanism. However, and the overall pattern indicates that consumers did not abandon the rational perspective. The second most cited coping strategy was "emotion-focused", which suggests a struggle between utilitarian and hedonic motives for shopping. The remaining strategies revealed consumers' inclination to practicality and functionality during the pandemic. The third most cited coping strategy, "search process," reflects consumers'

exploration of or use of new shopping applications and their comparison of items to find the best alternative. The "defer" coping strategy, as the fourth adopted strategy, seemed to be a weak attempt to postpone shopping or limit time spent in retail stores. This effort can reveal the meaning of shopping in consumers' lives. Despite all the threats, consumers went shopping during restricted times during COVID-19 or did not delay their shopping. Finally, "simplify" was found to be the least cited coping strategy. Previous literature provides no evidence on the frequency or ranking of coping strategies adopted by consumers.

This study also examined the effects of demographic characteristics on consumers' coping strategies. First, for both genders, "plan" is the most cited coping strategy, indicating the need for a more rational, cognitive approach to shopping. However, females had a strong inclination toward emotional shopping, which may have led to concern for self-gratification or impulsive buying. This finding is consistent with that of Rahardjo et al. (2023), who found that females were more likely to engage in emotion-based shopping during the pandemic. Moreover, this finding complements the notion that males adopt a more pragmatic and rational coping strategy, especially during times of crisis (Matud, 2004). Second, across age groups, the emotion-focused strategy was most often reported by the 17-30 and 51+ age groups, whereas emotion-focused coping was lowest among the 41-50 age group. This finding is similar to Diehl et al.'s (1996) and Liang et al.'s (2020) findings that the younger individuals are more prone to emotional coping strategies rather than rational ones (Diehl et al., 1996; Liang et al., 2020). Given that individuals aged 31 to 50 are in a more mature stage of their life cycle, their indulgent tendencies toward shopping might be tempered by their existing responsibilities. As for the effect of age, Agrawal (2023) argued that younger consumers adopted "searching and processing" as a coping strategy, seeking information and using new technologies. However, the current study reveals that the "search process" does not seem to differ across age groups of respondents.

Regarding marital status and the presence of children, it was found that singles, especially those without children, appeared to react more emotionally, rather than rationally. This finding is broadly consistent with that of Bentall et al. (2021), who found that having children in the home may lead to stockpiling, suggesting planning as a coping strategy. Accordingly, married individuals may prefer more rational coping strategies, prioritizing and optimizing their home-related responsibilities (Cutrona, 1996; Prime et al., 2020). Literature shows that during the COVID-19 period, single adults in particular experienced more intense pressure to cope with

isolation, loneliness, and illness on their own due to physical distance from family and close relatives (Treiber, Emerson, and Shackelford, 2024), which may also lead them to focus more on emotion-focused coping strategies.

5.1 Implications

This study makes important contributions to the literature on consumer behaviour during a pandemic. First, the findings indicate that coping strategies developed during the shopping process encompass both problem- and emotion-oriented coping styles, as suggested by the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). Strategies such as planning, deferral, simplifying, and searching reflect consumers' problem-oriented coping efforts, while coping mechanisms such as self-reward or impulsive/compulsive purchases overlap with emotion-oriented coping strategies. These findings reveal that the coping types emphasized in Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) model can be activated simultaneously in shopping context during a pandemic.

Additionally, the findings of this study theoretically expand the framework of Sujana et al. (1999) and provide an original update by classifying consumers' coping strategies in the context of shopping during a crisis, such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic. This study shows that these strategies serve not only to manage cognitive complexity but also to manage emotional tension in a shopping context characterized by high stress, fear, and uncertainty.

To the authors' knowledge, no other study has examined consumers' coping mechanisms in the shopping context. In this respect, this study contributes to the existing literature by identifying several coping mechanisms adopted by consumers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, introducing two new coping mechanisms, and revealing which coping mechanisms and strategies were most adopted by Turkish consumers. Although COVID-19 is not an entirely new phenomenon in terms of coping strategies, rather, it represents a unique context in which mechanisms described in previous pandemic and crisis literature have been experienced on a longer-term, global scale. Therefore, the coping strategies discussed in this study should not be considered unique to the COVID-19 pandemic, as they are grounded in a theoretical framework that can be applied to other crises and uncertain situations. Additionally, findings disclose demographic differences in the adopted coping strategies, which have not been previously addressed holistically in the literature.

The findings of this study also offer valuable implications for retailers, given that academic research on coping strategies during a pandemic is quite limited in the Turkish literature. The finding that consumers tend to engage in emotional shopping during pandemics underscores the need for brands to develop marketing strategies to establish an emotional connection with consumers during crisis periods. The prominence of coping mechanisms such as "self-spoiling" and "impulsive/compulsive shopping" indicates that demand for hedonic product categories could increase during those times, requiring brands and retailers to offer more of these products. Additionally, retailers can reduce consumer stress by offering a simplified shopping experience and helping them plan their shopping trip (e.g., fast checkout lines, self-checkout systems, pre-prepared shopping lists, personalized recommendations, etc.), given that consumers resort to planning and simplification strategies. In line with demographic findings, coping strategies show considerable differences by gender, age, marital status, and having children, underscoring the diversity of consumer behaviour. More specifically, the study reveals that women and young consumers are more prone to emotional shopping, underscoring the need for differentiated campaigns and content strategies tailored to these audiences.

The study also guides multi-stakeholder practices for managing shopping behaviour during crises. For public authorities, understanding the coping strategies consumers develop can contribute to the more effective design of information policies and regulatory interventions during difficult times. For instance, transparent information from public authorities on food supply security can prevent panic buying during crises, thereby preventing consumers from resorting to extreme measures such as stockpiling. For civil society organizations and relevant stakeholders, understanding the psychological mechanisms shaping consumer behaviour during crises allows for more targeted design of public awareness campaigns promoting sustainable consumption and social solidarity.

5.2 Limitations and Future Suggestions

While this study provides various theoretical and practical implications, it also has some limitations. First, the choice of the convenience sampling method and the uneven distribution of the sample (the majority of participants being women and university graduates) limit the sample's ability to represent the general population. Second, the interviews were conducted in 2022, a period when pandemic restrictions had largely ended, and individuals had partially

returned to their normal lives. While the timing was a strategic decision to reveal not only temporary panic responses but also behavioural patterns that became permanent during the pandemic, conducting the interviews during the peak of pandemic restrictions could have allowed for more immediate and direct observation of coping strategies.

Additionally, the study did not differentiate single people based on whether they were unmarried or divorced. Future studies may focus on this difference, as the situation during a pandemic can be more difficult for divorced people, especially if they are single parents. Finally, the study was conducted in Türkiye and cannot be generalized to other geographies.

6. Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted significant changes in consumer shopping behaviour, prompting individuals to adopt a range of coping strategies to manage uncertainty and stress. This study highlights the coping strategies used by consumers in Türkiye and reveals that they vary across demographic groups. By revealing how consumers responded to pandemic-related disruptions in their shopping practices, the findings contribute to a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour during crisis periods. The study offers important implications for academics and practitioners who want to better predict and meet consumer needs in uncertain environments.

Based on qualitative insights from 60 participants, this study enhances the theoretical understanding of how consumers in Türkiye perceived and responded to the shopping-related challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings reveal that consumers adopted diverse coping strategies as adaptive responses to increasing uncertainty and stress, and that these strategies also varied across demographic characteristics. Gender, age, and having children are key factors shaping consumer responses. Women and younger consumers are more inclined toward emotion-focused shopping behaviour. By revealing how individual differences shape shopping-related coping, the study extends coping theory into the consumption context and offers a description of consumer behaviour in times of crisis.

BEYANLAR / DECLARATIONS

Etik İlkelerine Uygunluk Beyanı

“COPE-Dergi Editörleri İçin Davranış Kuralları ve En İyi Uygulama İlkeleri” çerçevesinde

aşağıdaki beyanlara yer verilmiştir:

Bu çalışma, Anadolu Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Kurulu 865778 protokol ve 27.03.2025 tarihli kararı doğrultusunda gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Declaration of Compliance with the Ethical Principles

In line with the “COPE-Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors” the following statements are included:

This study was conducted in accordance with the decision dated 27.03.2025 and protocol number 865778 of the Anadolu University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee.

Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı

Yazarlar herhangi bir çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan eder.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest

Katkı Oranı Beyanı

Yazarlar makaleye eşit oranda katkı sağlamıştır.

Declaration of Contribution

The authors have equally contributed to the manuscript.

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