

Београдска академија пословних и уметничких струковних  
студија

# ЗБОРНИК РАДОВА

ПРВА МЕЂУНАРОДНА НАУЧНО-СТРУЧНА КОНФЕРЕНЦИЈА  
BELECON

Београд, 2-3. јун 2022.



## CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND PROFESSIONAL  
CONFERENCE BELECON

**Belgrade Business and Arts Academy of Applied Studies**

Belgrade, 2-3 June 2022.

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Задовољство нам је да Вам представимо Зборник радова Прве међународне научно- стручне конференције BELECON, коју организује Београдска академија пословних и уметничких струковних студија БАПУСС у Београду у просторијама своје Академије 2-3. јуна 2022. године.

BELECON је међународна научно-стручна конференција, мултидисциплинарног карактера организована од стране Београдске академије пословних и уметничких струковних студија. Циљ конференције је да се представе достигнућа и иновације из друштвено-хуманистичких наука, али и из области информационих технологија и уметности. Поред научног доприноса, конференција има за мисију да међусобно повеже истраживаче из земље, региона и света и створи простор за слободну размену идеја и знања и међусобну подршку. На овај начин, BELECON жели да олакша и обезбеди међународну сарадњу, како самих истраживача, тако и институција.

Широк опсег тема конференције омогућио је истраживање и разраду различитих аспеката.

### ТЕМАТСКЕ ОБЛАСТИ

- Микроекономија,
- Макроекономија,
- Финансије и банкарство,
- Рачуноводство и ревизија,
- Пословна информатика,
- Менаџмент,
- Маркетинг и трговина,
- Царински и порески систем,
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- Пословна статистика,
- Уметности и дизајн,
- Екологија,
- Образовање.

Зборник радова садржи радове који су рецензирани и прихваћени за презентовање на скупу.

Београд, 2-3. јун 2022.

## **FOREWORD**

We are very pleased to present the Conference Proceedings of the First International Scientific Conference BELECON, organized by the Belgrade Business and Arts Academy of Applied Studies BAPUSS in Belgrade in the premises of its Academy on June 2-3, 2022.

BELECON is an international scientific-professional conference of multidisciplinary character organized by Belgrade Business and Arts Academy of Applied Studies. The aim of the Conference is to present achievements and innovations in the field of social sciences and humanities, as well as in the field of information technology and art. In addition to the scientific contribution, the Conference has the mission to connect the researchers from the country, the region and the world and create a space for free exchange of ideas, knowledge and mutual support. In this way, BELECON wants to facilitate and ensure international cooperation for the researchers and the institutions as well.

The broad themes of the Conference have allowed for exploration of different aspect of these areas.

### **THEMATIC AREAS**

- Microeconomics,
- Macroeconomics,
- Finance and Banking,
- Accounting and revision,
- Business Informatics,
- Management,
- Marketing and trade,
- Customs and tax system,
- Law and public administration,
- Sociological sciences,
- Business statistics,
- Art and design,
- Ecology,
- Education.

Conference proceedings contains papers that have been reviewed and accepted for presentation at the conference.

Belgrade, 2-3. June 2022.

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## **MENADŽMENT, MARKETING, BIZNIS**



## **E-COMMERCE DEVELOPMENT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE MACEDONIAN CASE**

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**Abstract:** In general, coronavirus has changed the way individuals, companies and countries in general have functioned so far. The pandemic left consequences in almost all segments of social life, and the reduced turnover of companies was a motive for digitalization of services. Many companies and institutions that in the past weren't providing services electronically began to use alternative ways to offer their products and services online. The paper will present the authors' research on online shopping made during the 2020 pandemic, and will provide an overview of the challenges facing e-commerce development and will offer adequate conclusions that may be applicable in the future.

Macedonians, according to the official data available from the National Bank, in the first six months of 2020 made a turnover of 4.3 billion denars with payment cards in domestic online stores, which is an increase of 113% compared to the first six months of 2019. According to the official data, in June 2020 there were 1,223 virtual points of sale, i.e. e-shops, which is an increase of 20% compared to December 2019. These data as well as the findings of the authors in their research confirm the basic hypothesis that the crisis caused by Covid-19 had a positive impact on the development of e-commerce in our country.

**Keywords:** crisis, commerce, online shopping, digitalization, internet services.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 was detected on 12 December in Wuhan city of China, and it was noticed that people are infected by pneumonia by illusory link to a shop that retails fresh sea food to people. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a Covid-19 disease pandemic caused by the new coronavirus SARS-CoV-2.

Within week millions of people infected with this virus in China (Bhatti, A., Akram, H., et al 2020). Many countries were infected with this virus and their economies. It is a challenging situation for global and it effects the e-commerce trends (Nakhate & Jain, 2020; Whiteford, 2020).

The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, at the session held on March 18, 2020, based on Article 125 paragraph 1 of the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia proposed to the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia to establish a state of emergency on the territory of the country to prevent entry , spread and control of Covid-19 virus. The declared pandemic by the World Health Organization with the new type of virus that has spread to all continents, affected the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia and an appropriate response was necessary.

The decision of the WHO and the Government of RNM sent a strong and clear message to all that the situation with the coronavirus is extremely serious and that each country, in accordance with its set-up and health system, must begin to prepare to deal with this crisis.

Based on the new situation, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia adopted a set of measures that were to prepare the country and the population for the "new reality". At the 22nd session of the Government, among other things, the information on the use of funds from the Development Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia to support the companies affected by the coronavirus situation was reviewed and adopted. There was also a need to take measures to support business in order to alleviate, i.e. reduce the consequences that the economy in the Republic of North Macedonia suffers as a result of the coronavirus. One of the measures was the introduction of a new credit line of 5 million euros, through which companies whose economic activity is affected by the coronavirus will be directly credited. Lending was planned to be performed on more favourable terms - longer grace periods, longer repayment period and lower interest rates than standard loans. The loans were provided in the amount of 5,000 to 20,000 euros, and the amount is determined depending on the number of employees in the company: for micro enterprises with 1-10 employees from 3-5 thousand euros, for small enterprises with 10-50 employees from 5 -15 thousand euros, for medium enterprises with 50-250 employees from 15-30 thousand euros. This first package of measures was further amended with a series of new packages of measures adopted by the Government in accordance with the development of the pandemic situation on the territory of the country, as well as the impact of the economic sector on the health crisis.

At the 26th session of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, a decision was made to amend the decision to restrict the movement of citizens throughout the country.



The ban on movement for all citizens from 21:00 to 06:00 was replaced by a restriction on movement from 21:00 to 05:00 due to congestion in public transport and the need for citizens to get to work in the morning. Additionally, the Government decided to ban the movement of citizens over 67 from 11:00 to 05:00 the next day. The government also made another decision to restrict the movement of young people under 18 and for them the curfew would start at 21:00 and last until 12:00 the next day. On March 18, 2020, President Pendarovski declared a state of emergency for a period of 30 days, and it was extended on April 16, 2020 for another 30 days, and in mid-May 2020 for another 14 days. The continuation was explained that it aims to enable the Government and other competent institutions to fight more effectively with the health and socio-economic effects of the pandemic.

The state of emergency that practically started with the declaration of the pandemic, as well as the measures to restrict the movement to protect against the spread of the pandemic, reflected into a limited opportunity for citizens to shop, which at that time they exercised in the allowed time intervals, while adhering to the measures for maintaining social distance, wearing protective masks and disinfection. The pandemic, as well as the measures in the state of emergency, affected the customers, but also the companies that with the new measures had a drastic decline in consumption and profits and many of them started the process of digitalization and offering services and products online.

## **2. LITERATURE PREVIEW, METHODS AND HYPOTHESIS**

In the literature, the e-commerce is defined as the purchase or sale of goods or services through a computer network.

According to Gupta, A (2014), the electronic commerce or e-commerce refers to a wide range of online business activities for products and services. It also pertains to "any form of business transaction in which the parties interact electronically rather than by physical exchanges or direct physical contact.

There are three main types of e-commerce: business-to-business (websites such as Shopify), business-to-consumer (websites like Amazon) and consumer-to-consumer (websites such as eBay). According to Molla, A & Heeks, R (2007), "e-commerce can bring significant benefits to firms in developing countries". According to Abdul Gaffar Khan (2016), "convenience is one of the benefits that the customer receives from e-commerce and thus increases customer satisfaction." "Digitalization" is one of the greatest transformations of modern society. Current changes due to digitalization are not the least important in the retail sector, which has influenced and influenced development in general (Hagberg John et al, 2016). According to Almeida, G. A. A. et al (2007), "technologies designed to enhance commercial transactions using the Internet have evolved rapidly. "However, we have not yet achieved the ideal world of secure transactions using the Internet, as unresolved buyer privacy issues hinder the further development of technology."

As Vladimir, Z. (1996). noticed "traditional E-commerce, conducted with the use of information technologies centring on electronic data interchange (ED!) over proprietary value-added networks, is rapidly moving to the Internet. The Internet's World Wide Web has become the prime driver of contemporary E-commerce.

E-commerce is the use of electronic communications and digital information processing technology in business transactions to create, transform, and redefine relationships for value creation between or among organizations, and between organizations and individuals (Gupta, A, 2014).

The global spread of the Covid-19 pandemic has sparked discussions about whether customers can be reoriented and goods and services procured through e-commerce. Thus, customers have replaced stores, supermarkets and malls with online portals and other shopping applications, buying a variety of products ranging from basic products to well-known brands (Gokila, Dr. V. Gokila, 2021).

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the basic hypothesis that the crisis caused by Covid-19 had a positive impact on the development of e-commerce in our country. The specific hypotheses are that:

- bans on movement of citizens in the pandemic, had a positive impact on the growth of online shopping in the Republic of North Macedonia,
- e-commerce is most prominent in younger age groups,
- the COVID-19 pandemic encouraged older age customers to make their first purchase online,
- Internet advertising has a positive effect on online consumption,
- Social media plays a significant role in online buying behavior.

The authors (Stojanovska-Stefanova A et al, 2021) tested the hypotheses through the methods of analysis of the available literature, analysis of officially available statistical data from the institutions and the survey conducted on the Microsoft Teams platform in the period from 8 to 15 June 2020. Respondents who responded to the survey were grouped into five groups: 18 to 24 years, 25 to 34 years, 35 to 44 years, 45-54 years and 55 years and more. Of the respondents, 72% were employed, 10% unemployed, 15% were students, and 3% were retired. By gender 72% of respondents were female and 28% male.

Regarding the place of residence, the respondents were from Skopje and several municipalities in the Republic, who answered anonymously through a survey questionnaire that contained a total of twenty questions.

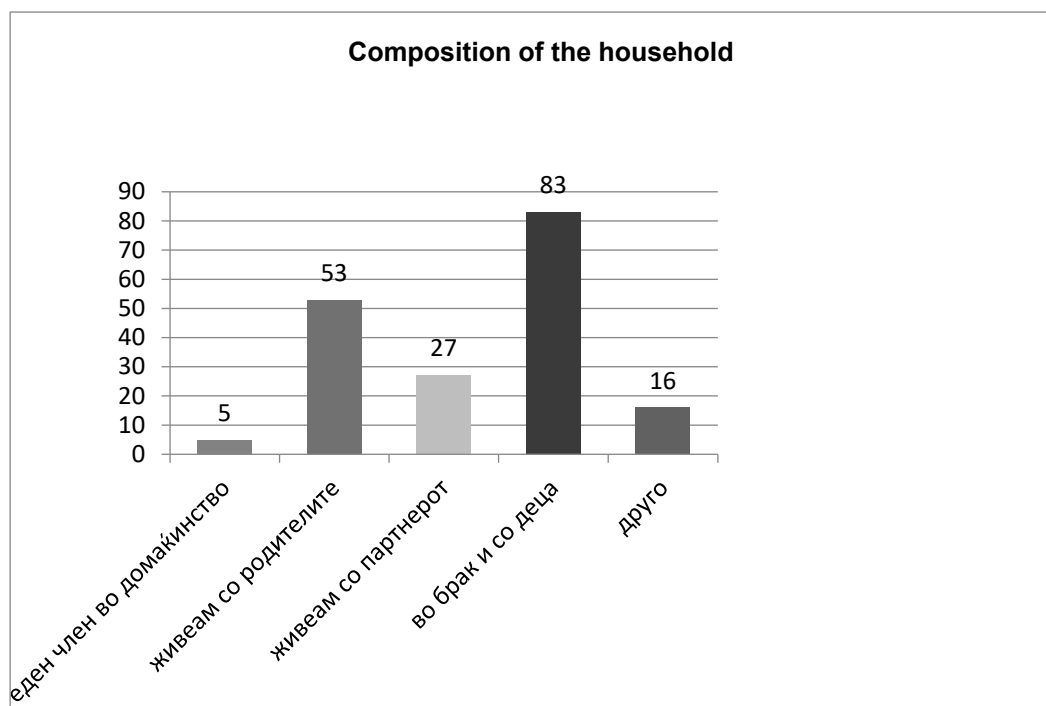
### 3. MACEDONIAN CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR E-COMMERCE GROWTH IN THE FUTURE

E-commerce is a boom in the modern business. It is a paradigm shift influencing both marketers and the customers. Rather e-commerce is more than just another way to boost the existing business practices (Amin, S., Kansana, K., & Majid, J. (2016).

Based on the conducted research, the authors came to findings that indicate the challenges and opportunities for e-commerce growth in the future.

Among the respondents, 45% stated that they are married and with children, 29% that they live with their parents, 15% that they live with their partner, 3% that they are the only members of the household and 8% gave information about another status.

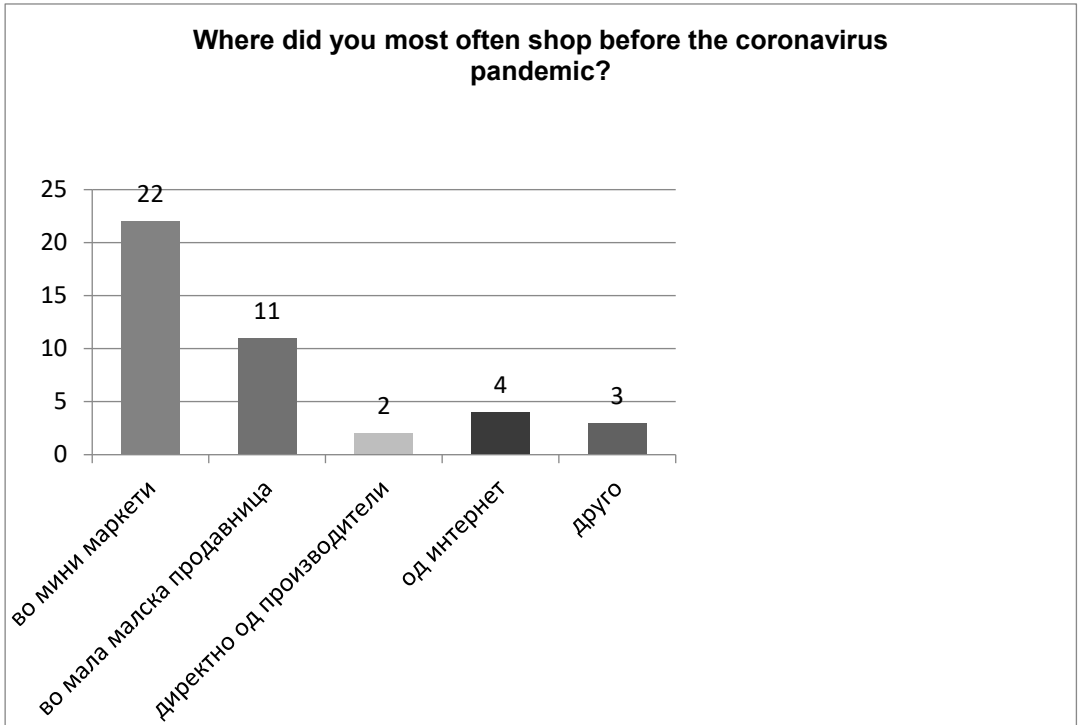
Figure 1: Composition of the households of the respondents



Source: Own analysis of the authors based on conducted research

When asked where they most often shopped before the coronavirus pandemic, 71% said they shopped in hypermarkets / supermarkets, 11% said they shopped in mini markets, 6% in big malls, the same percentage of 6% shoppers shopped in a small neighbourhood store, 3% Responded that they shopped online, 1% said they shopped directly from manufacturers, and 2% chose "other".

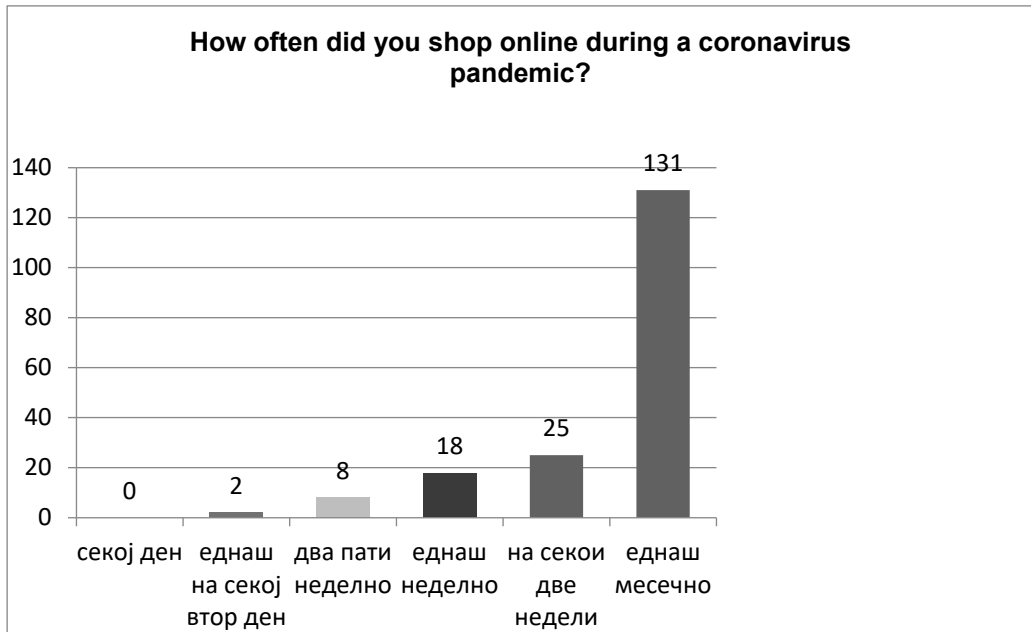
Figure 2: Overview of shopping places



Source: Own analysis of the authors based on conducted research

When asked how often they shopped online during the coronavirus pandemic, the majority of 71% said they shopped online once a month, 15% shopped every two weeks, 10% shopped online once a week, 4% shopped twice a week, with a minimum of 1% shopping every other day, with no respondents shopping online every day.

Figure 3: Overview of Internet consumption during a coronavirus-induced pandemic



Source: Own analysis of the authors based on conducted research

In order to determine how customers shop online and how ads affect online consumption, the question was "Did you use an online shopping list according to your needs?". To this question 65% answered that they did not use a list for the needs, while a drastically lower percentage 35% stated that they bought based on an established list. This ratio indicates the fact that sometimes the citizens decided to buy something online on the basis of the attractiveness of the offer or on the basis of advertising.

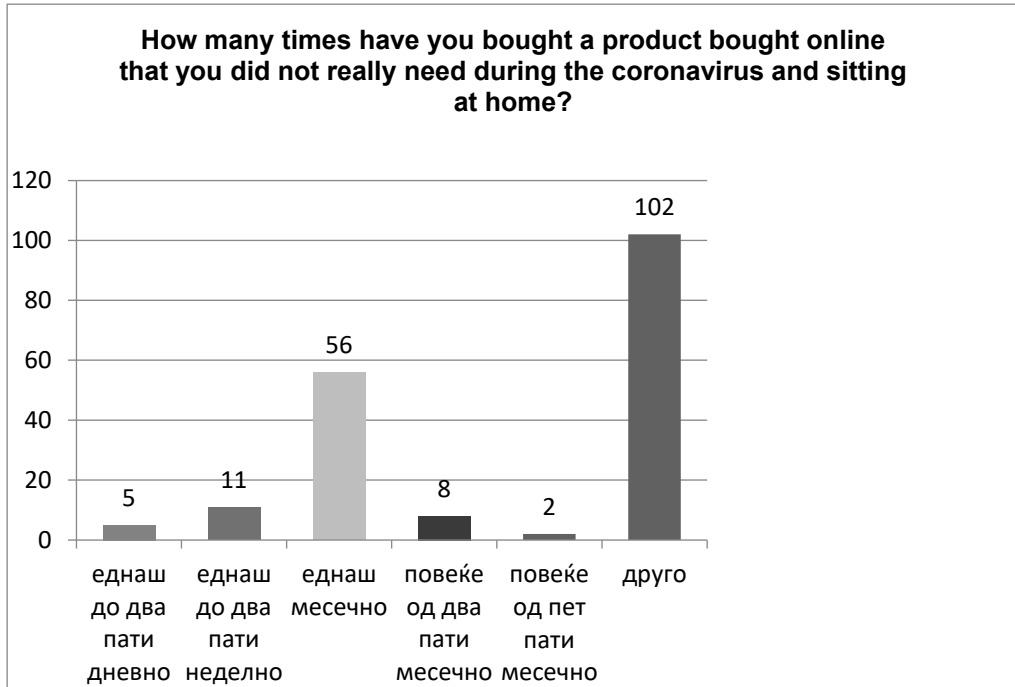
Figure 4: Overview of how to shop online as needed



Source: Own analysis of the authors based on conducted research

To the question "How many times have you bought a product seen on an online ad that you did not really need during the coronavirus and sitting at home?" of the respondents, 31% answered that once a month they were targeted with an online advertising offer and bought that product, 6% said that they bought such a product once or twice a week, and 4% more than twice a month. 3% of the respondents once or twice a day bought a product seen on an online advertisement, 1% bought more than five times a month, and the highest percentage of the respondents 55%, did not have a clear position on this issue and chose "something else".

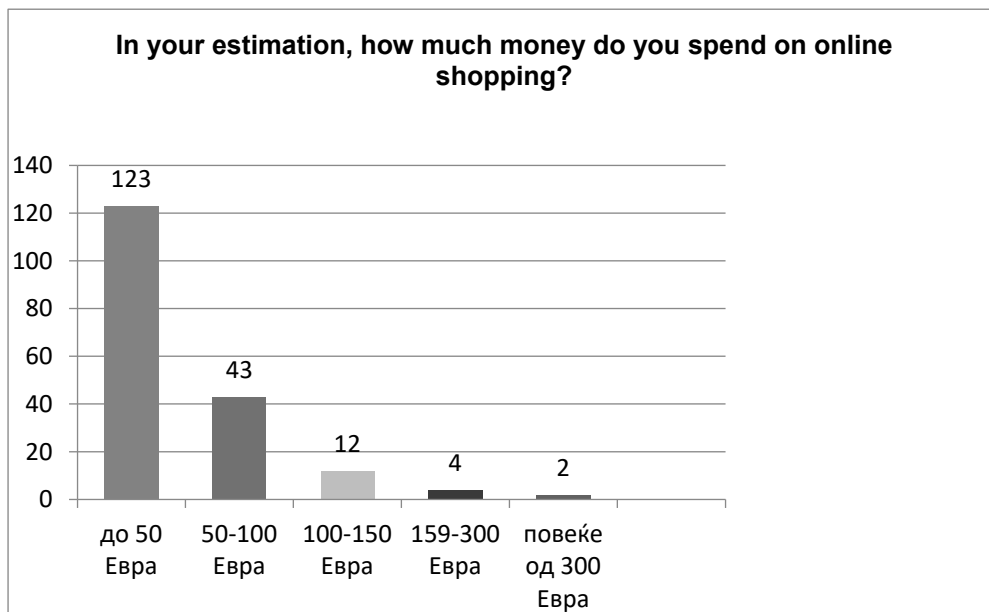
Figure 5: Overview of buying products from the Internet based on advertising, which were not essentially needed by customers



Source: Own analysis of the authors based on conducted research

To the question "How much money do you spend on online shopping?" the majority of respondents 67% said that they spent up to 50 euros in denar counter value online, more than twice a percentage or 23% answered that they spent between 50 and 100 euros in denar equivalent, 7% spent between 100 and 150 euros, and only 2% spent from 150 to 300 euros and the lowest percentage 1% spent more than 300 euros.

Figure 6: Overview of the amount of funds that customers spent during online shopping



Source: Own analysis of the authors based on conducted research

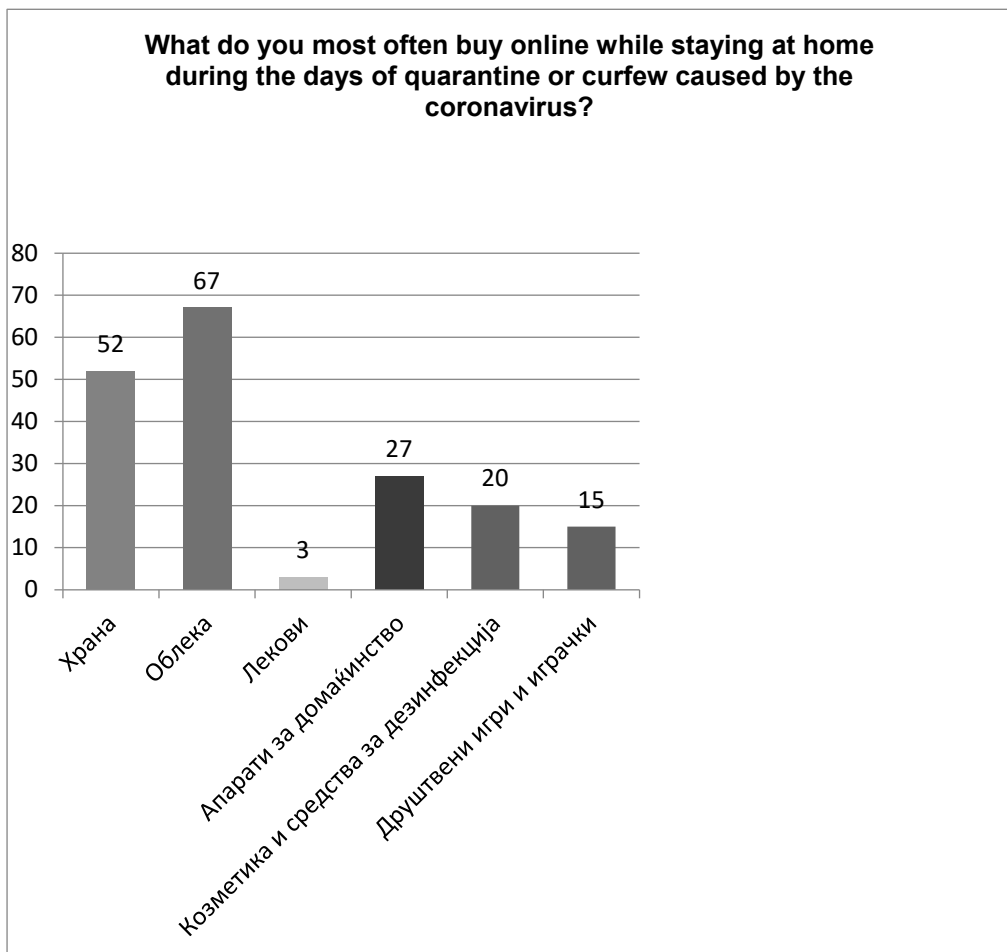


These data on the low amount spent by most respondents, can indicate three aspects related to the purchase:

1. The purchasing power of customers;
2. Distrust of the security of electronic transactions;
3. Distrust of online stores to replace the product or refund the funds in case it does not meet expectations and they want to return it.

To the question "What did you most often buy online while sitting at home during the days of quarantine or curfew caused by the coronavirus?", 36% said they bought clothes, a significant percentage 28% bought food, 15% bought household appliances, 11% said they bought cosmetics and disinfectants, 8% ordered board games and toys for children, and 2% ordered medicine.

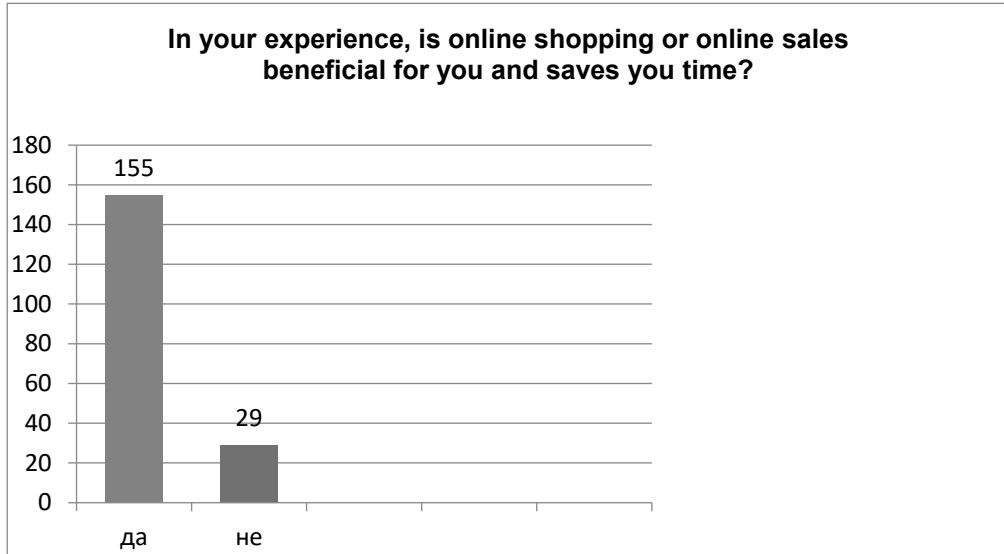
Figure 7: Overview of online purchases by product type



Source: Own analysis of the authors based on conducted research

To the question "In your experience, is online shopping or online sales beneficial for you and saves you time?" the largest percentage of respondents 84% said positively, and only 16% negatively.

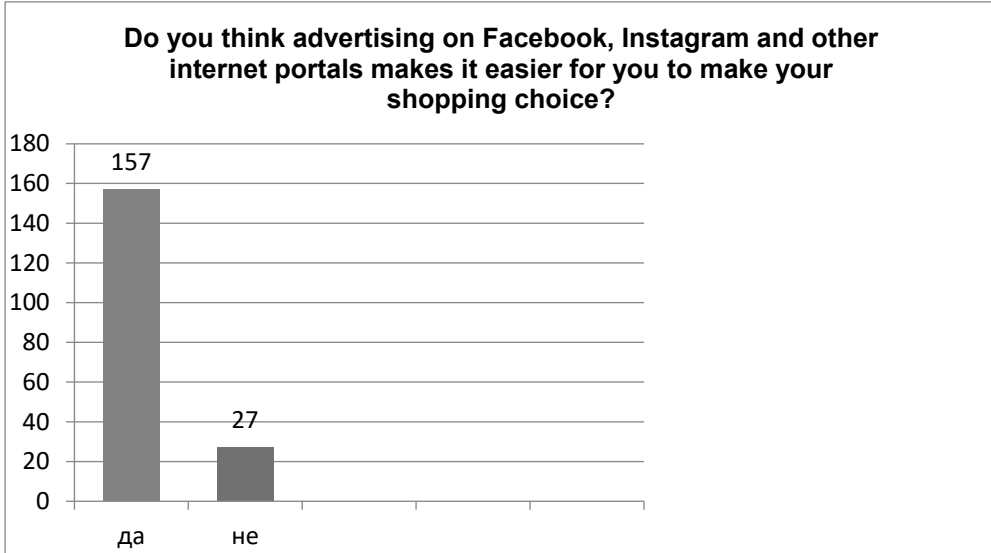
Figure 8: Time-saving estimation spreadsheet for online shopping



Source: Own analysis of the authors based on conducted research

In order to determine how social media advertising affects the purchase, the question "Do you think advertising on Facebook, Instagram and other Internet portals makes it easier for you to make your shopping choice?" the largest percentage 85% said positive and 15% negative.

Figure 9: Tabular overview of the impact of online advertising in facilitating purchasing choice

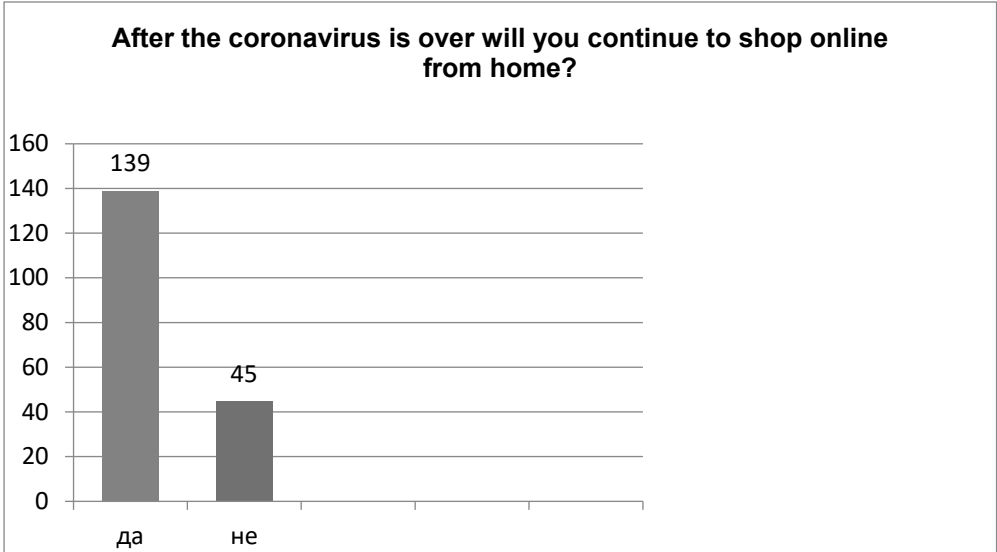


Source: Own analysis of the authors based on conducted research

The research showed that the positive experiences that customers gained while shopping online during the pandemic, which they plan to continue in the future. This ratio of the results obtained from the respondents confirms the second auxiliary hypothesis that online advertising has a positive effect on online consumption.

So, to the question "After the coronavirus is over, will you continue to buy online from home?", "Yes" answered 76%, and only 24% answered "no".

Figure 10: Overview of respondents who would shop online after the end of the pandemic



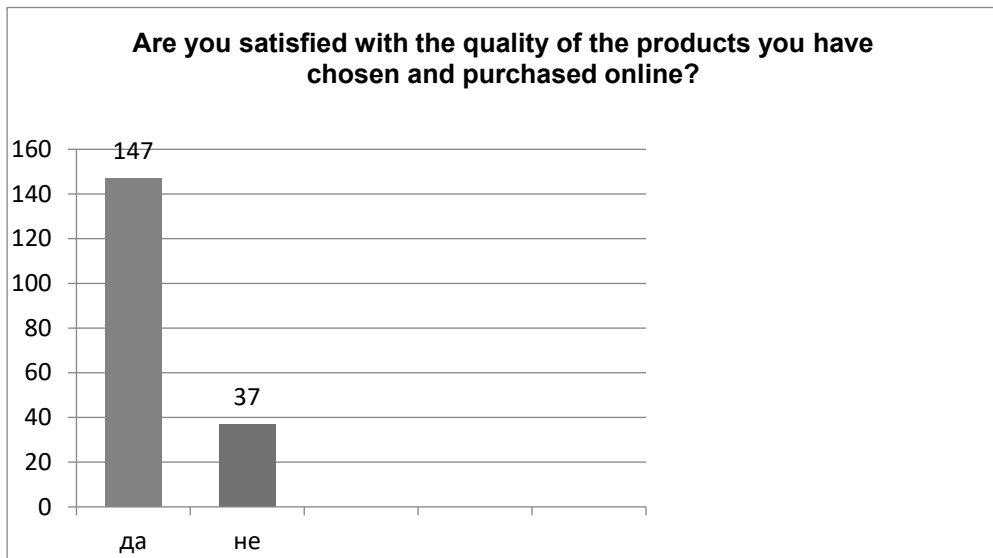
Source: Own analysis of the authors based on conducted research

This positive trend confirms the basic hypothesis of the authors that the crisis caused by Covid-19 has positively affected the development of e-commerce in our country and indicates the fact that e-commerce has the potential to develop in the future.

The data that 76% would continue to shop online after the pandemic caused by Covid-19 could be due, among other things, to consumer satisfaction with the quality of the products purchased so far, the comfortable atmosphere in which they bought and the time savings.

Namely, to the question "Are you satisfied with the quality of the products you have chosen and bought online?", 80% answered in the affirmative, and 20% answered "no".

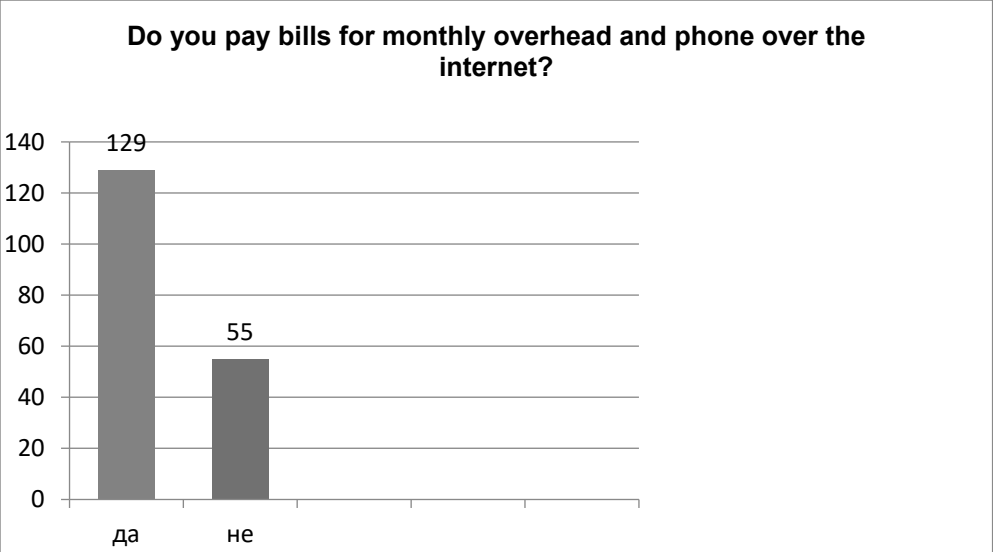
Figure 11: Overview of consumer satisfaction with the quality of products purchased online



Source: Own analysis of the authors based on conducted research

Regarding the use of online services, the respondents were also asked "Do you pay bills for monthly overheads and telephone via the Internet?", 70% of them answered "yes" and 30% answered negatively.

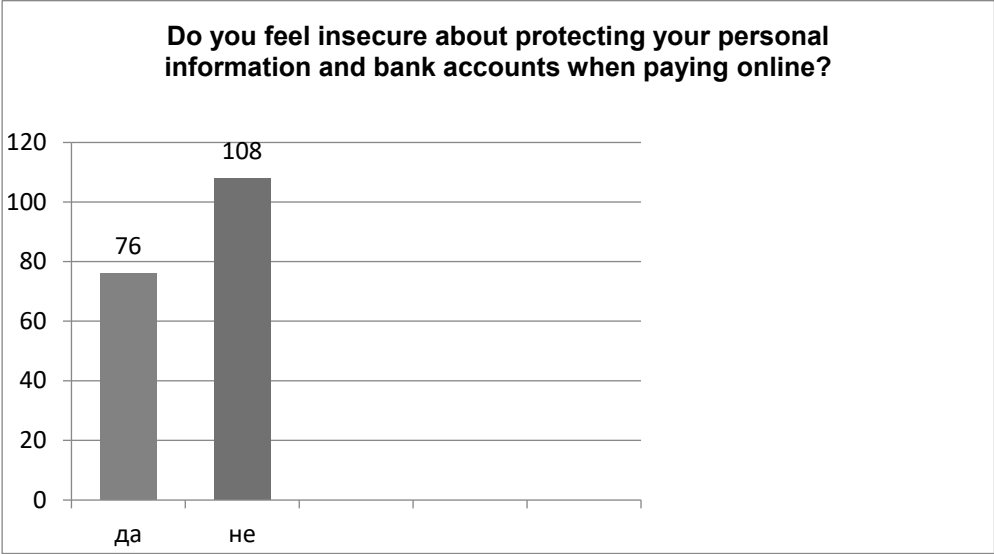
Figure 12. Overview of overhead bill payment online



Source: Own analysis of the authors based on conducted research

To the question "Do you feel insecure about the protection of your personal data and bank accounts when paying online?", 59% answered negatively and 41% positively.

Figure 13. Tabular presentation of the security of personal data and bank accounts during electronic payment



Source: Own analysis of the authors based on conducted research

The high percentage of respondents who answered that they feel insecure in the area of personal data protection and bank accounts indicates the need in the future for institutions, companies and banks to develop tools that will increase consumer confidence.

The trend of development and growth of e-tourism after the onset of the coronary crisis in individuals is noted in the official statistics published by the National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia. Macedonians, according to official data available from the National Bank, in the first six months of 2020 made a turnover of 4.3 billion denars with payment cards in domestic online stores, which is an increase of 113% compared to the first six months of 2019. According to official data, in June 2020 there were 1,223 virtual points of sale, ie e-shops, which is an increase of 20% compared to December 2019.

Statistics show that citizens have increasingly used the benefits of electronic banking. The number of electronic credit transfers initiated by the citizens in March increased by significant 30.3% on annual basis, ie by 21.4% on monthly basis. Citizens especially used computers to make payments. More specifically, in the payments made via computer, in March, there was a high annual growth of 26.4%, ie monthly growth of 27.2%, which is twice higher than the annual growth in the first quarter of this year, which was 13.8%. Citizens also used their mobile phones to make payments significantly more than before. The number of payments made by mobile phone in March increased by 45.5% on annual basis, amid more moderate monthly growth of 7.4%. The realized growth in the payments made in this way is relatively close to the annual growth realized in the first quarter of last year, of 45.9%.

The National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia announced that payments with payment cards at physical points of sale in the first quarter of 2020 achieved a high annual growth of 22.3%, which stems primarily from individuals. Thereby, in March, annual growth of the number of transactions of natural persons was registered by 11.4%, amid high annual decline of transactions with legal entities of 17.8%.

Regarding the use of payment cards at online points of sale, in the first quarter of this year, a high annual growth was also registered in the number of transactions with 62.3%, which stems primarily from individuals.

This indicates that citizens used payment cards for online shopping in March, reaching a very high annual growth of 99%, with an annual decline in the number of transactions of legal entities by 2.5%.

In the conclusions of the third annual conference on e-commerce held in 2020, in the first half of 2020 there was an increase in the number of online outlets, ie it was 1223 in June 2020, compared to 823 in 2017, ie 1020 in December 2019. year. In 2019, 36% of the population with internet access made an online order compared to 20% in 2017. The value of online transactions that Macedonians made to domestic e-merchants in the second quarter of 2020 increased by 177%. It is positive that the structure is changing and more purchases / payments are made at home, ie the percentage value to foreign e-traders is 59%, compared to 70% in 2017. According to the data published by the Association for Electronic Commerce of Macedonia (AETM) during 2020, a total of 10 million online transactions were realized in the country and abroad, compared to 6.7 million in 2019, which is an increase of 50.1 %. If you look at the total value of transactions, in 2020, Macedonians spent 229.5 million euros online on domestic and foreign online merchants.



The structure of realized transactions is changing and more and more people are buying from domestic e-merchants. Compared to 2019, when the total value of realized online transactions by Macedonians was 169 million, the growth in 2020 is not significantly higher compared to the growth of previous years, ie it is 35.6%. In the data presented by AETM, there is a significant change in the structure of realized transactions in 2020, ie if in 2019 only 41% of the total value spent belonged to domestic e-traders, in 2020, 73% of the value of online transactions is realized to domestic e-merchants.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the above, we can conclude that the pandemic caused by the coronavirus, which brought quarantines and bans on the movement of the population, had a positive impact on the development of e-commerce and that it is continuously growing in our country.

Based on the research, it can be concluded that companies need to adapt to the new reality and develop communication strategies that will digitize services to customers, while helping them to easily access the offers, which should be clear and creative. Research has shown that customers often choose to buy a product that they have seen in advertising on social networks or Internet portals, which confirms one of the auxiliary hypotheses that online advertising has a positive effect on online consumption.

The research also confirmed that a large number of customers are ready to continue shopping online even after the end of the covid pandemia, and this is associated with the satisfaction of the product purchased online and the comfortable shopping atmosphere in which time is saved.

We can conclude that in the future, in order to maintain the positive trend of interest in online services, it is necessary for companies to think about online advertising in order to make their offer available to demand, but also to work on fostering customer trust by confirming security. of the transactions made. Undoubtedly, companies should work on digitalization and strengthening consumer confidence through the application of security protocols, clearly defined privacy policies, education in cooperation with banks to bring security to customers, as well as guarantees for refunds or the possibility of product replacement services.

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