



A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

RESEARCH ON IKEA'S CHANGING CONSUMER BEHAVIORS



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Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	3
1.1	An Overview of IKEA	3
1.2	Research Rationale	4
1.3	Research Objectives and Questions	6
2.	Literature Review	7
2.1	Definitions of Marketing and Consumer Behavior	7
2.2	Definitions of Marketing Models	9
3.	Methodology	13
3.1	Research paradigm.....	14
3.2	Research Methods.....	15
3.3	Selection of Research Methods.....	16
3.4	Data Collection and Analysis	17
4.	Timescale	18
5.	Ethical Considerations	19
	References.....	21

1. Introduction

1.1 An Overview of IKEA

In the highly competitive landscape of contemporary markets, the triumph of enterprises frequently relies upon the effectiveness of their marketing strategies. As a preeminent global entity in furniture retail, IKEA has not only garnered widespread brand recognition on a global scale through its pioneering products and distinctive marketing methodologies but has also swiftly expanded its reach by virtue of its unique business model and marketing strategies (Almhult, 2024).

Inter IKEA Systems B.V., trading under the name IKEA, is a Swedish multinational conglomerate renowned for its expertise in crafting and retailing self-assembly furniture, kitchen appliances, decorative items, home accessories, and a diverse range of related products and services. Established in 1943 by Ingvar Kamprad and presently domiciled in the Netherlands, IKEA has solidified its position as the foremost global furniture retailer since 2008 (Loeb, 2021). The nomenclature adopted by the conglomerate is an amalgamation of the founder's initials and the geographical markers of his familial roots—Elmtaryd, the ancestral farm, and Agunnaryd, the proximate village located in Småland, southern Sweden (Deb, 2018). The organization is primarily renowned for its avant-garde furniture designs, minimalist approach to interior design, and its immersive retail concept, epitomized by meticulously curated showroom vignettes enabling customers to engage firsthand with the showcased merchandise. Furthermore, the company is lauded for its meticulous cost management practices and relentless pursuit of product refinement, exemplified notably by its innovative ready-to-assemble furniture retailing model. These strategic imperatives have empowered IKEA to sustain a competitive advantage by offering products at more competitive price points relative to industry counterparts (Alonso, 2022).

As of September 2023, the IKEA brand has established a presence in 59 countries, operating a total of 462 stores globally (Statista Research Department, 2024). In the

fiscal year ending in 2023, IKEA reported a total operating income of EUR 29.1 billion, reflecting a 5.4% increase compared to the preceding fiscal year (Ringstrom & Dowsett, 2018). This growth was primarily driven by revenue generated from franchise fees and the sale of goods to IKEA franchisees. The performance of operating income is directly influenced by the retail sales of all IKEA franchisees worldwide, as these sales drive the wholesale activities of the Group and serve as the basis for determining franchise fees. During the fiscal year of 2023, the operational impact of COVID-19 measures on IKEA's retail operations was relatively minimal, with the majority of IKEA stores operating without significant constraints. However, despite an increase in sales revenue, there was no corresponding growth in sales volume or product quantity. This was attributed to the high costs of living caused by inflation and rising energy prices, resulting in decreased consumer purchasing power and a subsequent decline in IKEA sales (Sin et al., 2021).

For various reasons, such as tax optimization, IKEA employs a complex corporate framework. Under this framework, all IKEA stores operate under franchise agreements with Inter IKEA Systems B.V., which oversees aspects such as branding, design, manufacturing, and supply chain management. Another entity within the IKEA group, Ingka Group, serves as the principal franchisee for the majority of IKEA stores, remitting royalties to Inter IKEA Systems B.V. (Cuofano, 2024). Additionally, certain IKEA stores are independently operated by third-party franchisees.

1.2 Research Rationale

In the contemporary business landscape, global enterprises face a myriad of challenges, requiring an accurate understanding of the multifaceted dynamics influencing their strategies and operations. IKEA, a renowned leader in the furniture retail sector, is no exception, contending with the intricate internal and external factors that shape its market performance. Notably, recent global events, including the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, have catalyzed unprecedented disruptions across industries, compelling enterprises like IKEA to reassess and adapt their strategic approaches.

The COVID-19 pandemic has engendered a seismic shift in consumer behaviors and preferences, profoundly altering consumption patterns and channel dynamics (Pantano et al., 2020). With governments worldwide implementing stringent containment measures, including lockdowns and social distancing mandates, traditional brick-and-mortar retail establishments, including IKEA's physical stores, have grappled with diminished foot traffic and revenue streams. Concurrently, the proliferation of remote work arrangements and raised health concerns among consumers have accelerated the adoption of e-commerce channels, precipitating a surge in online transactions. Against this backdrop, IKEA has confronted the imperative of recalibrating its omnichannel strategies to align with evolving consumer preferences and market exigencies.

Moreover, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the attendant geopolitical unrest have injected further volatility into IKEA's international operations, underscoring the imperative of geopolitical risk management and scenario planning (IKEA, 2022). As geopolitical tensions disrupt global supply chains and engender economic uncertainty, enterprises operating in affected regions, including IKEA, are compelled to navigate a complex landscape characterized by currency fluctuations, regulatory hurdles, and logistical challenges. Consequently, IKEA's strategic decision-making processes are informed by a precise understanding of geopolitical dynamics and their implications for market entry, expansion, and risk mitigation strategies.

In light of these exigencies, this research seeks to elucidate the impact of geopolitical events and public health crises on IKEA's marketing strategies and consumer behavior dynamics. By critically analyzing IKEA's response mechanisms and strategic adaptations in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions, this study aims to furnish insights into the strategic imperatives guiding multinational enterprises in turbulent times. Furthermore, by extrapolating key learnings from IKEA's experiences, this research endeavors to provide suggestions for enterprises to rise to analogous challenges, thereby contributing to the strategic resilience and adaptive management in the global business ecosystem.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

The primary aim of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical events on the marketing strategies of IKEA, along with the psychological shifts in consumer behavior. Furthermore, the study seeks to distill insights from these analyses to provide strategic guidance and recommendations for business decision-makers. The specific research questions are delineated as follows:

1. How has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced IKEA's marketing strategies, and what changes have occurred in consumer purchasing behavior and preferences?
2. What are the ramifications of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and geopolitical tensions on IKEA's international operations? How has IKEA responded to these challenges?
3. What lessons and insights can be derived from IKEA's experiences in navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical events, and how can they be applied to guide strategic decisions in other multinational enterprises?

Additionally, it is noteworthy that the global socio-economic upheaval triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the pace of digital transformation, profoundly impacting consumer purchasing behaviors and preferences worldwide. Simultaneously, rapid technological advancements, such as augmented reality (AR) and artificial intelligence (AI), have further transformed the consumer shopping experience and expectations. Understanding the implications of these changes for marketing strategies and product development is paramount for enterprises that seek to adjust their market strategies, meet consumer demands, and maintain competitiveness.

Through a thorough exploration of the aforementioned research objectives and questions, this study aims to furnish practical guidance for business decision-makers and contribute to a deeper understanding within the academic community of how

multinational enterprises navigate external environmental changes.

2. Literature Review

As a preeminent global entity in the home furnishing retail sector, IKEA's marketing strategies have garnered considerable attention. Amidst the backdrop of global economic volatility, particularly exacerbated by the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions, IKEA's chosen marketing approaches wield substantial influence over its performance and competitive stance. Consequently, conducting a thorough analysis of IKEA's marketing strategies holds paramount significance, serving not only to inform the strategic decision-making of the organization but also to furnish academia with nuanced insights into how multinational enterprises navigate and adapt their marketing strategies in response to external environmental dynamics.

2.1 Definitions of Marketing and Consumer Behavior

Before delving into the marketing strategies and approaches that IKEA adopts to respond to the ever-changing market environments and the ensuing changes of consumer behaviors, it is of paramount importance to first have an overall understanding of marketing related definitions. According to **Kotler (2013)**, the marketing management refers to the process of targeting proper markets so as to expand a company's market share and generating more profitability by establishing a good relationship with the local consumers who can bring in new vitality and opportunities for the organization, which is the priority for business managers, because customers value and satisfaction play a pivotal role in marketing. Based on this definition, it is crystal clear that a good marketing management requires a good customer relationship management, including customer value and customer satisfaction, so as to help IKEA release a more consumer-oriented marketing strategy that well responds to the changing consumer behaviors caused by both internal and

external factors, because the key of marketing lies in the goal of identifying, predicting and meeting the demands of consumers in a profitable manner. Customer buying behavior is the purchasing decisions made by ultimate individual consumers who purchase stuff for personal or household utilization, rather than business use, and their decisions are easily manipulated by external environment (Dibb et al., 2023). And it serves as one of the most important indicators to evaluate how successful a company's marketing strategies are since it can analyze consumers' reaction towards these strategies.

Prior to making marketing strategies, the prioritized tasks for organizations are to discern what consumers value and what their needs are. In Maza's opinion (2024), customer value is best as how valuable a product or service is to a customer, and such concept has evolved over decades of development. In the past, consumers only valued the quality and price of products, however, they now not only care about their prices and quality, but also the additional functions that products have, for example, enhancing their well-being and reducing their life burden. And if a company can consistently deliver such value to their customers, their brand loyalty will definitely be strengthened.

In addition to this, companies should also figure out the demands of their targeted consumers so as to deliver customized services and products, satisfying their differentiated needs. Theoretically, Maslow (1943) point out that consumer needs can be divided into a five-tier hierarchy. The first tier is psychological needs, including the people's basic needs for living necessities. The second is security needs, such as housing or shelters that can protect them from being attacked. The third is belonging needs, which means that people, including consumers, need to feel that they are part of a group and are accepted. At this level, organizations can seize the opportunity to release products and services that signify buyers with similar thoughts or behaviors are in the same group. The next level is esteem needs. People at this level attempt to establish self-esteem by purchasing certain products and services to demonstrate their social status. And the highest level is self-realization needs related to people's happiness and well-being. Practically, however, consumer needs serve as the

underlying driving force for consumers to make purchasing decisions, and thus it is imperative for organizations to stay up with the changing needs of consumers so as to achieve greater achievements, according to Tomas (2023).

Consumer satisfaction generally refers to an indicator of measuring how a firm's customers respond to their products and services and how much do their products and services fulfill customers' various demands and expectations, and how many profits the firm have generated (Zeithaml, 1990). In Westbrook's opinion (1980), customer satisfaction is "a sentimental reaction towards the experiences associated with particular products or services from companies, or even purchasing behaviors." Based on these two definitions, consumer satisfaction is obviously a vital indicator of evaluating customers' buying intention and brand loyalty. And such measurement is impacted by a myriad of factors, including quality of products and services, their prices, personal factors, and situational factors. Thus, releasing proper marketing strategies to amp up consumer satisfaction should be the priority in the face of the changing consumer behaviors.

2.2 Definitions of Marketing Models

A total of three models, namely PESTEL model, STP model and 7P's model, are applied in this research with the intention to assess the external and internal factors that pose either negative or positive impacts on IKEA with the special focus on consumer behaviors. Through a comprehensive analysis of external elements with PESTEL, the report can point out the external influence on consumers who also carry implications on IKEA. And the latter two models can assess the impact that IKEA's marketing strategies have on consumers and how the company should rise to the challenges caused by changing consumer behaviors.

PESTEL analysis serves as a pivotal tool utilized to scrutinize the macro-environment of an organization across the board by taking into account the implications stemming from six key dimensions: Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural, Technological, Ecological, and Legal factors (Johnson et al., 2014).

Political factors generally refer to the impact caused by government policies, political

instability or even conflicts among countries. In addition, in special periods, governments may also intervene in national economy through different methods which also can affect a company's operation.

Economic factors are easy to understand since they mainly include interest rate, inflation and income gaps between urban and rural areas. However, the unexpected factor can also affect a country's economy, or even the global economy, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused an economic downturn worldwide that has dealt a heavy blow to many multinational companies.

Socio-Cultural factors refer to different cultures and demographic structures that have potential impact on businesses as they are all interconnected to consumer behaviors and are closely related to what people think and how they behave (Lim, 2020).

Technological factors generally involve technical advances, innovation of new technologies, the level of R&D, and the applicable cutting-edge technologies. Currently, the development of AI (Artificial Intelligence) and IoT (Internet of Things) have transformed how businesses work. For example, they can adopt cross border e-commerce to deliver their goods to the farthest place in the world.

Ecological factors are valued by most of corporates since changes brought by climate change are more visible than ever before. As more and more companies are aware of the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which aims to strike a balance between economic, environment and social imperatives, ecological considerations also become their top considerations (UNIDO, 2024).

And legal factors usually refer to legislative and regulatory changes or even limitations that can pose either threats or benefits to companies.

STP model is a three-step marketing approach that includes segmentation, targeting and positioning proposed by Smith (1956) who argues that STP sets store by commercial effectiveness, dividing markets into smaller ones based on their characteristics, selecting one of the most valuable and the most proper one with biggest potential for further development, and making targeted marketing approaches and strategies.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (1994), segmentation is the process of dividing a

big homogeneous market into smaller heterogeneous ones based on the differentiated demands of consumers. And segmentation is also determined by various factors, including the changing consumer behaviors, the external environment and the internal factors within the organization. And the second step is targeting its customers via various methods and platforms. In this step, organizations attempt to ensure the availability of different methods and platforms to reach out new groups of customers. But Gavett (2014) point out that business should assess each segment based on the existed criteria for segmentation success, such as identifiability (the ability to discern customers and their attributes), substantiality (yielding significant profits), accessibility, stability (sufficient stability), differentiation (distinctive needs compared to others), and actionability (the capability to deliver products and services), prior to determining their investment strategies. And the last step for the model is positioning, which refers to the process of how organizations promote their products to their customers selected in the previous two steps by providing personalized services with them. By adopting this STP model, organizations can utilize hyper-customized services to target more valuable consumers effectively and reduce marketing costs at the same time.

MacCarthy (1987) put forward the concept of the marketing mix, which is an amalgamation of all elements within a marketing manager's control so as to fulfill the demands of the markets. In the same year, he also introduced the 4P's model, namely product, price, place and promotion, and such model has been subsequently expanded to the 7Ps, which provides insightful suggestions for organizations to promote their products by meeting consumer needs effectively and to foster a distinct marketing position that is customer-oriented. And then, Booms & Bitner (1982) proposed that the 4Ps marketing mix was not well enough to help organization to rise up to challenges in marketing services, and thus they added three elements—people, process and physical evidence.

Product refers to either products or services alone, or both of them, which are the core of businesses because they are basically the only thing that customers care. And thus, companies should set store by the quality, design, features and even packaging of

their products and services to retain old customers and attract new ones (Ajmal, 2023). Price is the only factor that affect companies' revenue in the marketing mix, and thus companies should pay additional attention to it, for instance, using questionnaires or other research methods to figure out what products and services that consumers are willingly to pay so as to gain more profitability.

Place refers to either physical stores and brick-and-mortar stores, or online platforms or social media where consumers purchase their stuff. But, organizations should realize that chain stores can generate more benefits than opening stores through intermediaries. Therefore, chain stores would be an optimum selection for companies to maximize their profits.

Promotion is one of the most vital part of marketing knowledge since businesses can adopt various promoting methods, including advertisement, on-site presentations and personalized strategies to persuade consumers to purchase their products (McCabe, 2024). During this promoting process, companies can also advocate their corporate culture and brand value to potential customers so as to establish a positive brand image and strengthen brand loyalty.

People refer to those who can establish either direct, or indirect connection with consumers as they are the key component to determine whether products and services can be sold to customers. Therefore, recruiting capable workforce who agree with corporate culture plays a decisive role in generating higher sales.

Process refers to the needed procedures or steps to deliver products or services to consumers, during which management of distribution is unavoidable as efficiency of logistics now is one of the most important experiences that customers value and also significant for improving customer satisfaction (Barrington, 2024).

Physical evidence refers to the tangible aspects of products, including its decoration, packaging and design, which are all valued by consumers to assess whether the brand has met their expectations and requirements at the beginning (Smith, 2024).

3. Methodology

Research per se is about tackling unknown questions by making innovations and expanding boundaries of ignorance in science and social science, rather than just collecting data or information to conduct an experiment (Goddard & Melville, 2011).

According to Saunders et al. (2023), research means surveys or experiments undertaken by researchers to explore undiscovered things or propose new and innovative ideas in a systemic and orderly fashion so as to increase their knowledge and expertise in certain fields. In other words, the goal of conducting a research is to uncover novel information or correlation in an effort to expand and validate the existed knowledge (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Before starting a research, it is of significance to understand what methodology is. According to Davidavičienė (2018), methodology attaches great importance to the suitability of employed techniques, the validity of resultant discoveries of the conducted research, and applicability of findings across diverse contexts. And Saunders et al. (2023) delineates it as a guidance of how research should be conducted, including theoretical and philosophical hypotheses and their impact can impose on research methods that are adopted.

After familiarizing the research methodology, it is the prerequisite to have an in-depth understanding of how to design an orderly and accurate research that can fulfill the initial expectations. And this requires an overall understanding on research onion (as shown in the Figure 1). Saunders et al (2023) proposed the concept of the research onion, offering a graphical representation elucidating the multifaceted components of designing research that requires examination and strategic planning. In essence, the research onion serves as a guiding tool for researchers to explain of what stages should be undertaken to design a comprehensive research methodology.

According to Tengli (2020), the research has been separated into three categories: the first category includes the two outer layers that refer to research philosophy and research approach, which are the foundation for researchers to make assumptions; the

second category involves research strategies, methodological choices for selecting methods and time horizons, which are all paramount steps for doing a research; and the third category is the inner layer of the research onion, that is, techniques and procedures during the research, mainly referring to data collection and data analysis, which is also the crucial stage for making new discoveries.

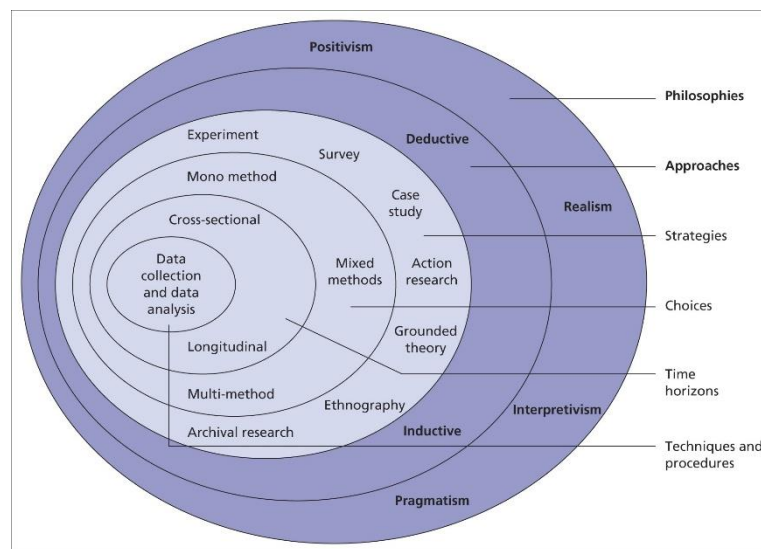


Figure 1 Research Onion

3.1 Research paradigm

A paradigm constitutes the philosophical and theoretical frameworks of a scientific discipline or academic domain, within which theories, laws and corresponding experimental inquiries are conceptualized and constructed (Jennifer, 2023). As for research paradigms, it refers to a set of beliefs, assumptions and comprehensions upon which researchers may be based to formulate a research philosophy, which in turn indicates the corresponding methodology (Proofed, 2023). In general, there are a myriad of types of research paradigms, including positivism, interpretivism, constructivism, and pragmatism. However, positivism and interpretivism are two most common one adopted in research.

Positivism depends heavily on the hypothetico-deductive approach to substantiate a quantitative hypothesis, typically requiring information collection, so as to discern the functional interconnection between causal factors (independent variables) and

outcomes (dependent variables), according to Ponterotto (2005). Despite its inclination towards quantitative methodologies, positivist research also adopts qualitative analysis as well, as exemplified by experimental analysis on the impact of interventions.

In contrary, interpretivism adopts qualitative research methodologies that set store by the exploration of individual's beliefs and motivations, rather than collecting quantitative data and gathering information, in order to attain more insightful understandings of social interactions (Nickerson, 2024). And interpretivists argue that the accessibility to the world occurs via social media, including languages and people's consciousness (Myers, 2020). It now has emerged as a critique of positivism in social science.

Constructivists believe that reality is inherently subjective, and that it can only be partially interpreted as it is constructed within people's mind. They emphasize that these realities are shaped through interpersonal interactions, and thus their goal is to elucidate the processes through which individuals formulate their perceptions and how these are influenced by social, cultural, and historical contexts. Constructivism acknowledges the interpretive and subjective essence of knowledge, regarding it as a valuable asset that enhances comprehension and enriches research findings (Pretorius, 2024).

And pragmatism, however, rejects to engage with contentious metaphysical concepts such as truth and reality. Rather, it acknowledges the possibility of singular or multiple realities that are amenable to empirical investigation (Creswell & Clark, 2018). And such paradigm often is connected with various mixed methods rather than singular method, and lays focus on research consequences and questions over the specific methodologies employed (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

3.2 Research Methods

Research methods serve as the foundation for conducting all types of researches because as Macdonald and Headlam (2008) point out "should an unsuitable research method be employed, it would hamper the basis for review, assessment, or

formulation of future strategies”. Particularly, research methods are totally different from the research methodologies analyzed above as research methods are basically approaches and procedures utilized to collect data and gather information needed for researches to validate hypotheses. Research methods fall into three categories, namely qualitative methods, quantitative methods and their combination. But the optimum method for the research relies on the research topic and what kind of data is needed to collect.

Quantitative research typically employs statistical techniques to identify patterns and uncover relationships within the data so as to draw a conclusion for new scientific discoveries or even new findings in social science. A quantitative research method involves numeric or statistical approaches to research design, including surveys or questionnaires, experiments and document screening to obtain numerical data and testify the research assumption or even research theories (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010).

Qualitative research involves the collection of data concerning lived experiences, emotions, or behaviors, as well as the meanings individuals attribute to them. And this approach aids researchers in achieving a deeper comprehension of intricate concepts, social interactions, and cultural phenomena (Williams, 2007). Typically, a qualitative research includes such methods as interviews, observations, focus groups and document evaluation. And the integration of qualitative and quantitative research methods can leverage the advantages of both two methods to conduct research in a statistical and conceptualized point of view.

3.3 Selection of Research Methods

This study adopts a mixed research methods, integrating qualitative and quantitative research approaches, to comprehensively understand IKEA’s marketing strategies and changes in consumer behavioral psychology amid the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical events. Qualitative research methods will be employed for literature review and case analysis, delving deep into IKEA’s process of marketing strategy formulation and implementation. Quantitative research methods will be utilized to analyze aspects such as changes in consumer behavioral psychology, aiming to obtain

more specific data and quantitative results.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection comprises two components: qualitative data and quantitative data. Qualitative data will primarily rely on literature review and case analysis, gathering and analyzing academic literature, industry reports, and case studies relevant to IKEA's marketing strategies. Quantitative data will be collected through methods such as questionnaire or surveys to obtain specific data and quantitative results regarding changes in consumer behavioral psychology.

Qualitative data analysis will employ content analysis methods to meticulously analyze and compare the collected literature and cases. Quantitative data analysis will utilize statistical analysis methods to describe the data obtained from questionnaire or surveys, conducting descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, etc., to reveal patterns and trends in changes in consumer behavioral psychology.

4. Timescale

No	Project Name	2024															
		June				July				August				September			
	Dissertation	week1	week2	week3	week4	week5	week6	week7	week8	week9	week10	week11	week12	week13	week14	week15	week16
1	Research Methodology																
	Define research aims, objectives & methodology																
2	Literature Review																
	Carry out extensive research																
	Compile & send questionnaire																
3	Findings & Analysis																
	Visualize data collected from questionnaire																
	Analyze questionnaire results																
	Analysis of models and data results																
4	Conclusion & Suggestion																
5	Submission Preparation																
	Consultation with supervisor																
	Proof-read and editing																
	submission																

This research project is meticulously structured according to a predefined timeline, spanning from June to September 2024, with each month divided into four-week intervals to ensure systematic progress.

In June 2024, the focus lies on defining the research aims, objectives, and methodology with precision. Concurrently, rigorous groundwork is laid through extensive literature review and the formulation of questionnaires to initiate data collection. In July 2024, the attention shifts towards data visualization and the preliminary analysis of questionnaire responses. These activities serve as foundational steps in preparing the groundwork for subsequent in-depth analyses. And the month of August marks an intensified phase of the project, dedicated to in-depth analysis of models and data results. This critical phase demands meticulous scrutiny and interpretation to extract meaningful insights. As the project approaches its end in September, efforts concentrate on synthesizing findings into conclusive statements and actionable recommendations. The final analysis of conclusion and suggestion sections form the focal points during this period.

Throughout the project, meticulous attention is devoted to submission preparation,

including ongoing consultation with supervisors, thorough proofreading, and meticulous editing, ensuring adherence to academic rigor and facilitating the seamless dissemination of research outcomes.

5. Ethical Considerations

This research endeavor is underpinned by a steadfast commitment to ethical principles guiding the treatment of human participants and the dissemination of research outcomes. The following ethical considerations are meticulously addressed:

1. **Participant Respect:** Upholding the dignity and rights of all participants is paramount. Informed consent is obtained prior to engagement in any data collection activities by asking participants to apprise the study's objectives, their rights, and potential risks and benefits. Confidentiality protocols are rigorously obeyed, ensuring all data is anonymized and securely stored to prevent unauthorized access.
2. **Transparency and Integrity:** Conducting research with unwavering transparency and integrity is imperative. Any potential conflicts of interest or biases are forthrightly disclosed, with measures implemented to mitigate their impact on research outcomes. Findings are presented objectively, devoid of data manipulation or distortion.
3. **Protection of Vulnerable Groups:** Special consideration is accorded to safeguarding the rights and well-being of vulnerable groups, including minors, the elderly, and individuals with cognitive impairments. Enhanced protective measures are implemented when involving these groups to ensure their welfare remains paramount.
4. **Regulatory Compliance:** Adherence to pertinent laws, regulations, and ethical guidelines restricting human participant research is non-negotiable. Institutional review board or ethics committee approval is sought where necessary, with strict adherence to data protection and privacy regulations.
5. **Publication and Dissemination:** The dissemination of research findings has stuck to the principle of responsibility and ethical rigor, fostering positive contributions to academic discourse while upholding the rights and privacy of all involved parties.

Proper attribution and acknowledgment of sources and contributors are ensured, with concerted efforts to enhance accessibility of research outcomes to all interested stakeholders.

In essence, this research maintains an unwavering dedication to upholding the highest ethical standards, ensuring the protection of participants' rights, dignity, and welfare throughout every facet of the research process.

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