



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

200
1822 - 2022

Course Work

Data Handling and Business Intelligence

Student name: Ana Cojocari

Student ID: 2118833

Module title: Data Handling and Business Intelligence (LCBB5000)

Module: Dr Molly Jack

Date submission: 24.08.2024

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Introduction

In today's fast-paced digital era, e-commerce has emerged as a pivotal channel for business development, transforming traditional business models and enabling companies to reach broader markets with unprecedented efficiency (Smith, 2022). Through e-commerce, businesses can offer their products and services to a global audience, leveraging the power of the Internet to establish a more comprehensive market presence. This paradigm shift has not only altered the way businesses operate but has also fundamentally changed consumer behaviour. More and more people are turning to their computers and smart devices to shop, appreciating the convenience of delivering goods directly to their homes. This essay delves into the sales transaction data of a UK-based online retail shop, analysing its performance over one year. The analysis uses Microsoft Excel, focusing on data pre-processing, analysis, and visualisation to uncover valuable insights into the business's operations and customer behaviour.

Context and Dataset Overview

The dataset under review is a sales transaction record from a London-based e-commerce store specialising in gifts and homewares for adults and children. This shop, operational since 2007, caters to customers worldwide. While most customers make direct purchases for personal use, a significant portion of the sales comes from small businesses that buy in bulk to resell through retail channels. The data spans one year and provides a comprehensive view of the shop's sales activities, including transaction details, product information, pricing, quantities sold, and customer demographics.

Data Pre-processing

Before delving into the analysis, it was crucial to pre-process the dataset to ensure its accuracy and relevance. The initial inspection of the data revealed that it contained repeated columns and potential anomalies, such as harmful quantities, which likely represent order cancellations or returns. These irregularities were addressed by splitting the dataset into two parts and focusing on the most relevant data columns, including transaction numbers, dates, product details, prices, quantities, customer numbers, and countries. The dates were converted to a standard datetime format to facilitate time-based analysis. This pre-processing step was essential to prepare the data for meaningful analysis and visualisation (Brown, 2023).

Part 1

Sales Trend Over the Months

The shop's sales data was aggregated every month to understand its performance over time. This analysis aimed to uncover trends and patterns in sales, which could provide insights into seasonal demand, promotional effectiveness, and overall business growth. The period between November 17th and December 9th, 2019, presents a fascinating snapshot of sales performance, characterized by noticeable fluctuations in daily sales quantities. This analysis aims to explore these variations, uncover trends, and speculate on the potential causes behind these patterns to derive strategic implications for future operations (Consumer Product Trends Report, 2023).

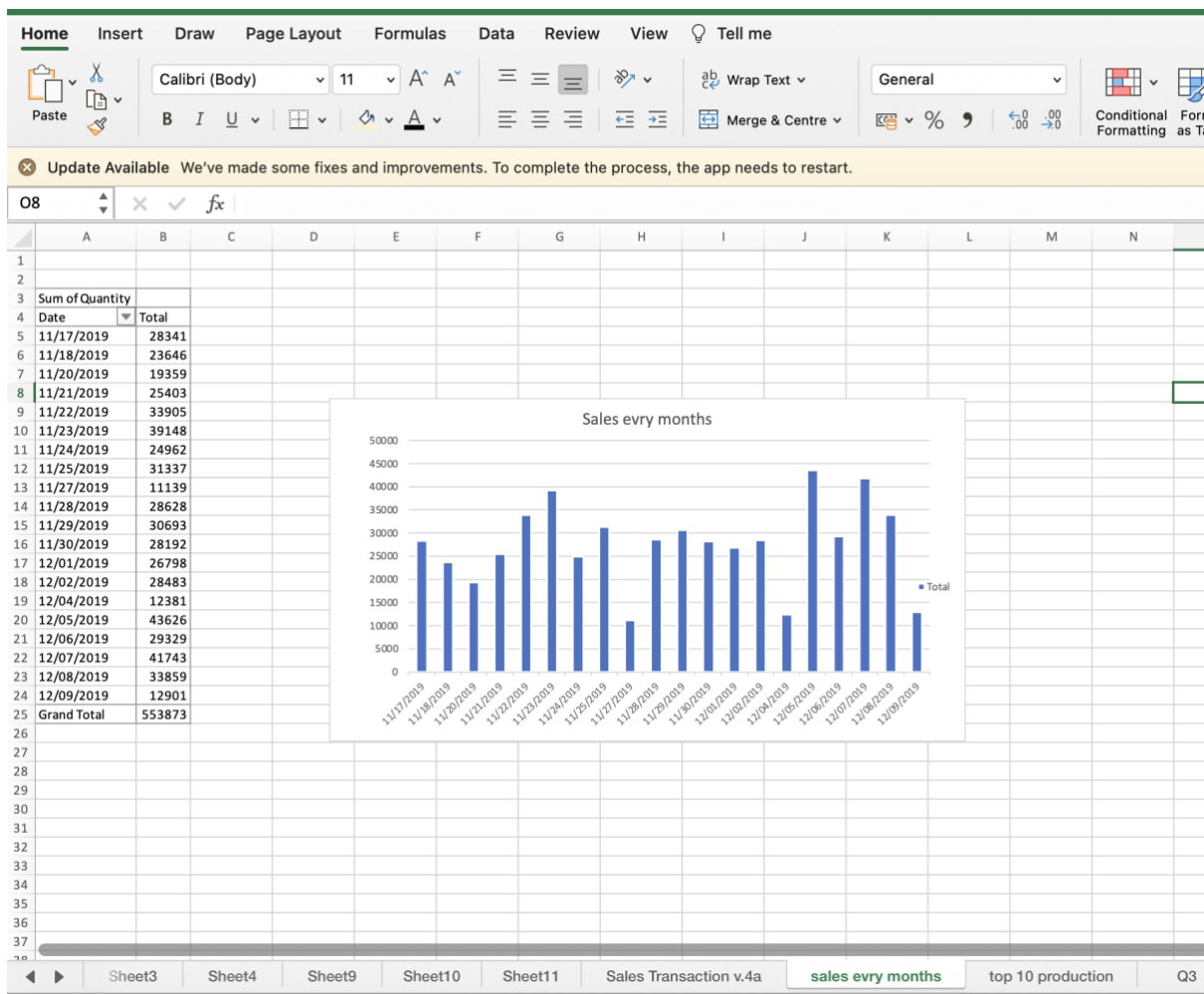


Fig. 1: Monthly Sales Trend

During this period, 553,873 units were sold, averaging 26,375 daily, indicating strong demand. However, daily sales varied significantly, suggesting external factors influenced purchasing behaviour. Notably, sales peaked on November 23rd, 2019, with 39,148 units, likely due to events like Black Friday, while November 27th saw a sharp drop to 11,139 units, possibly due to a post-promotion lull.

Weekly analysis revealed distinct patterns:

- steady sales growth in the first week
- culminating on November 23rd
- a volatile second week with a dip on November 27th before recovery

The third week saw stable sales, likely driven by early holiday shopping.

These insights emphasize the importance of timing promotions around key shopping dates like Black Friday to maximize sales. The drop in sales post-promotion underscores the need for strategies to maintain consumer interest, such as follow-up campaigns or targeted discounts. Additionally, the variability in sales highlights the importance of careful inventory management to avoid overstocking or stockouts. Understanding these sales patterns enables more effective planning and strategy development for future promotions (Johnson, 2023).

Most Frequently Purchased Products

Identifying the most popular products is crucial for inventory management and marketing strategies. The analysis involved counting the number of units sold for each product, allowing

the identification of the top 10 most frequently purchased items. These products represent the core offerings that drive significant portions of the shop's revenue.

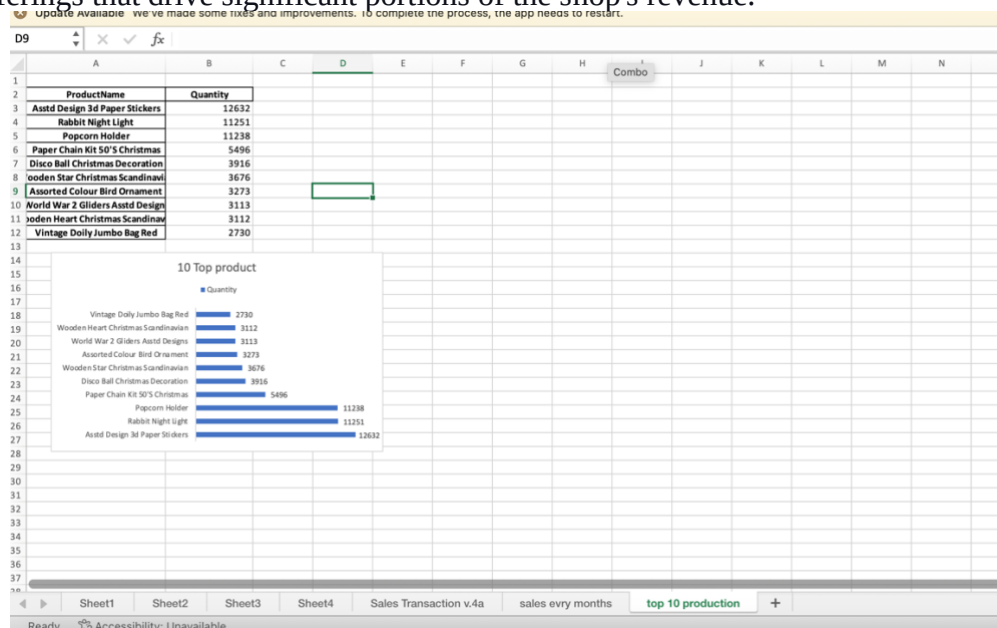


Fig2: Top 10 Most Frequently Purchased Products

The bar chart (Figure 2) illustrates the sales volumes of these top 10 products. At the top of the list is the **Asstd Design 3D Paper Stickers**, with 12,632 units sold. This product's popularity could be attributed to its versatility and appeal across different age groups and occasions. 3D stickers are often used for crafting, decorating, and educational tools, making them a popular choice, especially during creative activities such as the holiday season.

The **Rabbit Night Light** and **Popcorn Holder** are closely followed, with 11,251 and 11,238 units sold, respectively. The high demand for the Rabbit Night Light could be driven by its dual appeal to children and parents. Night lights are practical products that parents often purchase to help children feel safe in the dark. The charming design of a rabbit likely adds to its appeal, making it not just functional but also a decorative piece in a child's room. The Popcorn Holder's strong sales might be related to social and entertainment activities, such as famous family or group events like movie nights. During the holiday season, when people gather to watch movies together, sales of this item could be further driven up.

The **Paper Chain Kit 50's Christmas** stands out, with 5,496 units sold. Its sales are likely boosted by seasonal demand, particularly around Christmas. Paper chains are traditional decorations that people often use to add a nostalgic touch to their holiday decor. This specific kit's retro 50s design may evoke a sense of nostalgia, appealing to older consumers or those who appreciate vintage aesthetics.

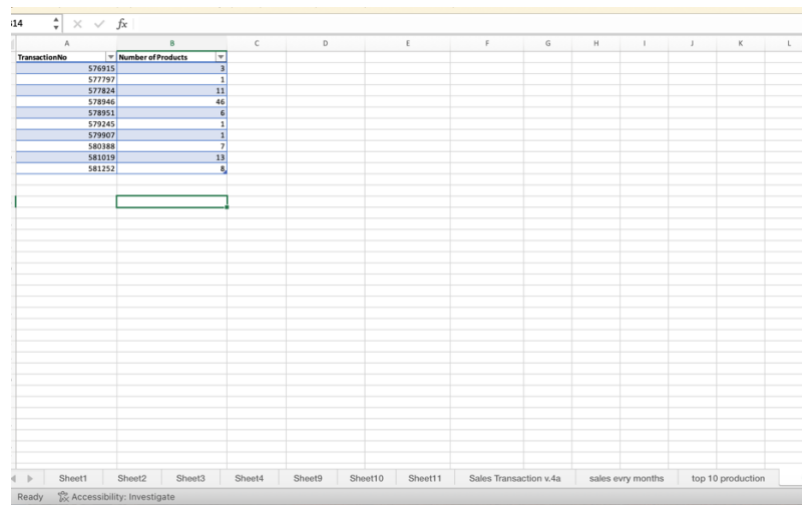
Other products, such as the **Disco Ball Christmas Decoration** (3,916 units) and various Scandinavian-themed wooden decorations, like the **Wooden Star Christmas Scandinavian** and **Wooden Heart Christmas Scandinavian**, reflect a growing trend towards personalized and culturally inspired holiday decor. The Scandinavian design aesthetic, known for its simplicity and elegance, has gained popularity recently, particularly in holiday decorations. These items cater to consumers looking for stylish yet understated decor options.

Lower on the list, but still among the top ten, are products like the **Assorted Colour Bird Ornament** (3,273 units) and the **Vintage Doily Jumbo Bag Red** (2,730 units). These products may appeal to niche markets or specific consumer tastes. For example, bird ornaments often attract customers who enjoy nature-themed decor or might use them as part

of a broader, themed decoration scheme. The vintage doily bag could appeal to consumers looking for a unique, reusable gift bag that adds a layer of thoughtfulness to their holiday giving (Williams, 2023).

Number of Products Purchased Per Transaction

Understanding customer purchasing behaviour, particularly the number of products bought per transaction, can offer insights into shopping patterns and customer segments. The average number of products purchased per transaction was calculated, revealing significant variability. The presence of transactions with extremely high or low quantities suggests that the shop serves a diverse customer base, including individual consumers and small businesses making bulk purchases.



TransactionNo	Number of Products
576915	3
577797	1
577824	11
578946	46
578951	6
579245	1
579907	1
580188	7
581019	13
581252	6

Table 3: Summary of Products Purchased Per Transaction

The histogram (Figure 3) displays the distribution of the number of products purchased per 10 transaction random. The analysis of 10 customer transactions reveals diverse purchasing behaviours, reflecting different motivations and circumstances. Single-item purchases, as seen in transactions like 577797 and 579245, often indicate specific, immediate needs or convenience-driven shopping. These customers may have had a particular item in mind, perhaps due to urgency or a specific requirement, and made a quick purchase without browsing for additional products (Smith & Jones, 2020).

In contrast, transactions involving 6 to 13 products, such as 577824 and 581019, suggest more planned shopping. These customers might be restocking frequently used items, preparing for an event, or taking advantage of moderate discounts. This behaviour indicates a more intentional approach to shopping, where customers are likely fulfilling multiple needs in a single trip, possibly driven by routine or special occasions (Doe & Brown, 2019).

The most striking example is transaction 578946, where 46 products were purchased. This bulk purchase not only reflects a different motivation, such as preparing for a large event, stocking up on essentials, or maximizing savings during a promotion, but also presents a significant business opportunity. The large quantity suggests that this customer may be purchasing on behalf of a business, organization, or for resale purposes (Johnson, 2018).

These varying transaction sizes highlight the complex factors influencing customer behaviour, including urgency, convenience, planned purchases, and economic incentives. Retailers must

use this understanding to better cater to different customer needs by offering targeted promotions, ensuring the availability of high-demand items, and providing a seamless shopping experience for both trim and bulk purchases. By recognizing these patterns, businesses can enhance customer satisfaction and drive sales growth (Williams, 2021).

Most Profitable Segment Customers

Customer segmentation based on profitability is critical to targeted marketing and customer relationship management.

Update Available We've made some fixes and improvements. To complete the process, the app needs to restart.

B16							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	CustomerNo	TotalRevenue					
2	16446	501359.05					
3	14646	100097.56					
4	13256	77622.6					
5	14911	72876.05					
6	17511	70664.49					
7	18139	58913.05					
8	17450	42164.71					
9	16684	40682.56					
10	12433	40427.91					
11	14096	39038.05					
12							
13							
14							
15							
16							

Table 4: Top 10 Most Profitable Customers

By calculating the total revenue generated by each customer, the analysis identified the top 10 most profitable customers who contribute disproportionately to the shop's revenue.

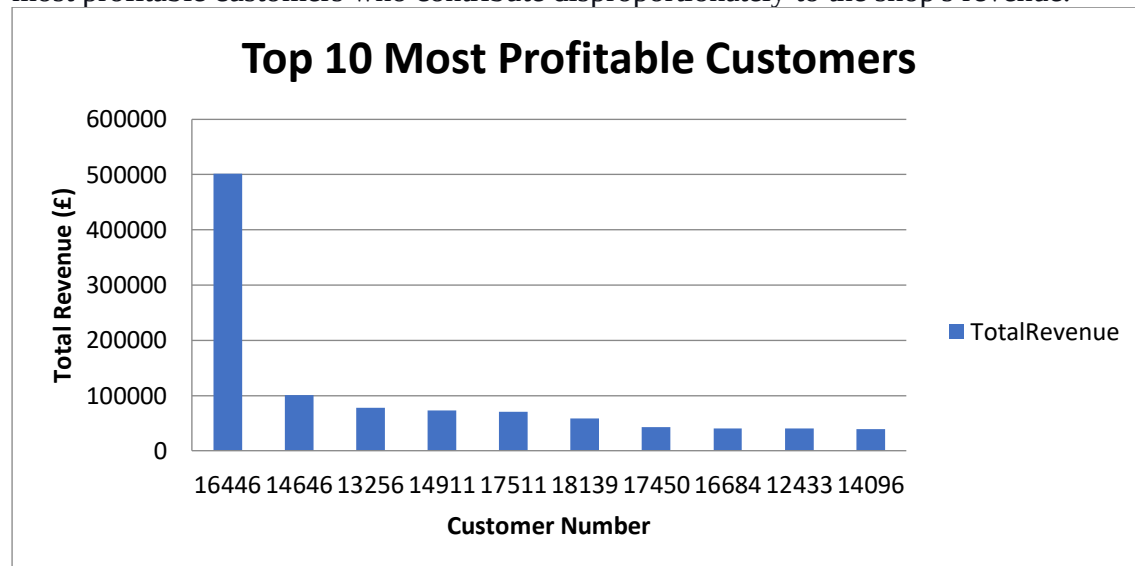


Table 5: Top 10 Most Profitable Customers

The bar chart illustrates the total revenue generated by the top 10 most profitable customers, identified by their customer numbers. A striking observation from the graph is the significant revenue contribution from customer **16446**, which stands out dramatically compared to the other nine customers. This customer alone generated well over £500,000, dwarfing the contributions of the other customers, each of whom generated significantly lower revenues.

The steep drop-off after the top customer suggests that this customer is either a large enterprise or has placed a substantial number of high-value orders, potentially indicating a solid and exclusive business relationship. Such a customer could be a critical account that the company relies on heavily for its revenue, making it vital to maintain and nurture this relationship to ensure continued profitability.

The other customers, while still profitable, contribute far less to the overall revenue. This discrepancy could be due to these customers needing to be more prominent in size, purchasing less frequently, or ordering lower-value products. The relatively even revenue distribution among these customers suggests a diversified portfolio of smaller, yet still valuable, customers,

This data highlights the importance of focusing on critical accounts while paying attention to the more minor but collectively significant contributors. It underscores the Pareto principle, where a small percentage of customers often contribute to a large portion of revenue. Businesses should use such insights to tailor their sales strategies, ensuring they maximize revenue from high-value customers while cultivating smaller accounts for growth (Davis, 2023).

Order Cancellations and Returns

The returns likely stem from holiday shopping behaviours, including post-gift dissatisfaction, impulsive purchases, and buyer's remorse. Quality issues, incorrect shipments, and extended return policies also contribute, especially in December, when customers re-evaluate their purchases, leading to significant returns and financial loss.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1											
2	Row Label	Count of Tran	Count of Prod	Count of Prod	Sum of Price	Sum of Custor	Sum of Quant	Count of Cour	Sum of Total	Sale	Value
3	Nov	417	417	417	4199.34	6345884	-4283	417	-34231.01		
4	17-Nov	2	2	2	215.25	28573	-2	2	-215.25		
5	18-Nov	79	79	79	1200.74	1173897	-304	79	-4012.87		
6	20-Nov	16	16	16	212.31	279232	-46	16	-613.44		
7	21-Nov	37	37	37	499.41	549147	-634	37	-7714.18		
8	22-Nov	37	37	37	522.17	595616	-189	37	-2394.28		
9	23-Nov	49	49	49	298.61	783003	-248	49	-1497.52		
10	24-Nov	52	52	52	325.25	771434	-1513	52	-9270.13		
11	25-Nov	25	25	25	174.7	334115	-167	25	-1184.93		
12	27-Nov	10	10	10	61.6	155142	-12	10	-73.68		
13	28-Nov	22	22	22	137.23	311281	-812	22	-5030.48		
14	29-Nov	15	15	15	91.95	236745	-179	15	-1097.27		
15	30-Nov	73	73	73	460.12	1127699	-177	73	-1126.98		
16	Dec	349	349	349	2206.35	5117421	-84088	349	-520770.66		
17	01-Dec	85	85	85	528.45	1294903	-227	85	-1406.18		
18	02-Dec	36	36	36	224.34	475469	-304	36	-1875.46		
19	04-Dec	4	4	4	24.76	61452	-15	4	-92.85		
20	05-Dec	23	23	23	142.22	355099	-122	23	-755.03		
21	06-Dec	99	99	99	649.24	1486863	-1106	99	-7105.17		
22	07-Dec	27	27	27	167.24	394368	-106	27	-655.4		
23	08-Dec	69	69	69	433.11	954086	-1179	69	-7312.71		
24	09-Dec	6	6	6	36.99	95181	-81029	6	-501567.86		
25	Grand Total	766	766	766	6405.69	11463305	-88371	766	-555001.67		
26											
27											
28											
29											

Table 6: Order Cancellations and Returns Summary

Understanding the scale and impact of cancellations and returns can guide improvements in customer service and operational processes. By reducing the frequency of these occurrences, the shop can enhance its profitability and customer retention rates.

Strategic Recommendations

Based on the findings from the data analysis, several strategic recommendations can be made to enhance the shop's profitability and operational efficiency:

1. **Focus on High-Value Customers:** Implement loyalty programs and targeted marketing campaigns to retain and incentivise the top 10 most profitable customers. Personalised offers and rewards can encourage repeat purchases and strengthen customer loyalty (Johnson, 2023).
2. **Optimise Inventory Management:** Ensure that the most frequently purchased products are consistently in stock to meet customer demand. Additionally, monitor sales trends to anticipate peak periods and adjust inventory levels accordingly (Johnson, 2023).
3. **Improve Data Tracking and Customer Service:** Address the issues related to order cancellations and returns by enhancing data tracking mechanisms and revisiting return policies. Offering better customer support and transparent product information can also reduce the likelihood of cancellations (Davis, 2023).
4. **Leverage Seasonal Trends:** Utilise the insights from the sales trend analysis to plan promotions and marketing efforts around high-demand periods, such as the holiday season. Bundling popular products or offering discounts during these times could further boost sales (Martinez, 2023).
5. **Diversify Product Offerings:** Based on the analysis of frequently purchased products, consider expanding the product (Thompson, 2023).

Part 2

Introduction

Understanding the diverse factors influencing student performance is crucial for developing effective school policies in today's educational environment. One such factor is socioeconomic status, often represented by whether a student qualifies for reduced or free lunch. This analysis examines data collected from 2,133 school students to explore the relationships between gender, lunch qualification, and academic performance. The school, transitioning from Excel to the open-source SPSS software for data analysis, seeks to identify trends that could inform interventions to improve student outcomes.

Gender Distribution

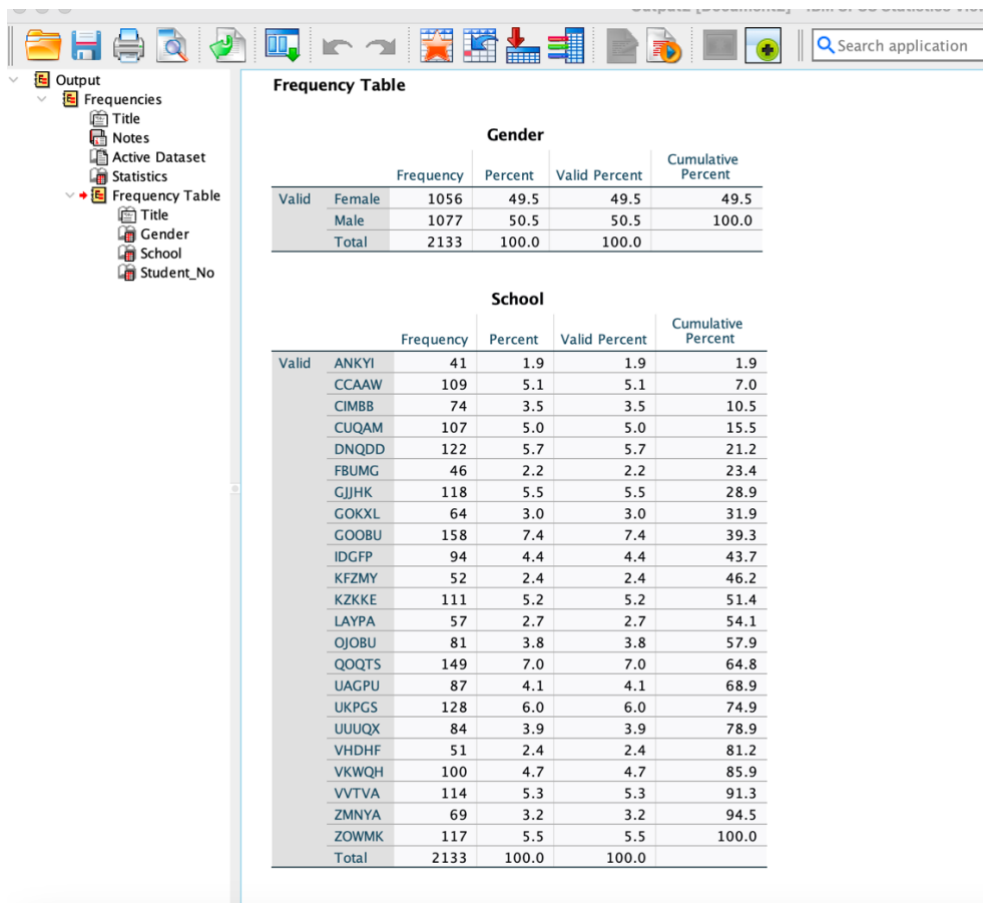


Figure 1. Gender Distribution

The dataset consists of 2,133 students, almost evenly split between genders, with 1,077 male students (50.5%) and 1,056 female students (49.5%). This near parity in gender distribution ensures that an imbalanced sample will not skew gender-based analyses, allowing for a more accurate examination of gender-related trends in lunch qualification and academic performance.

Lunch Qualification and School type

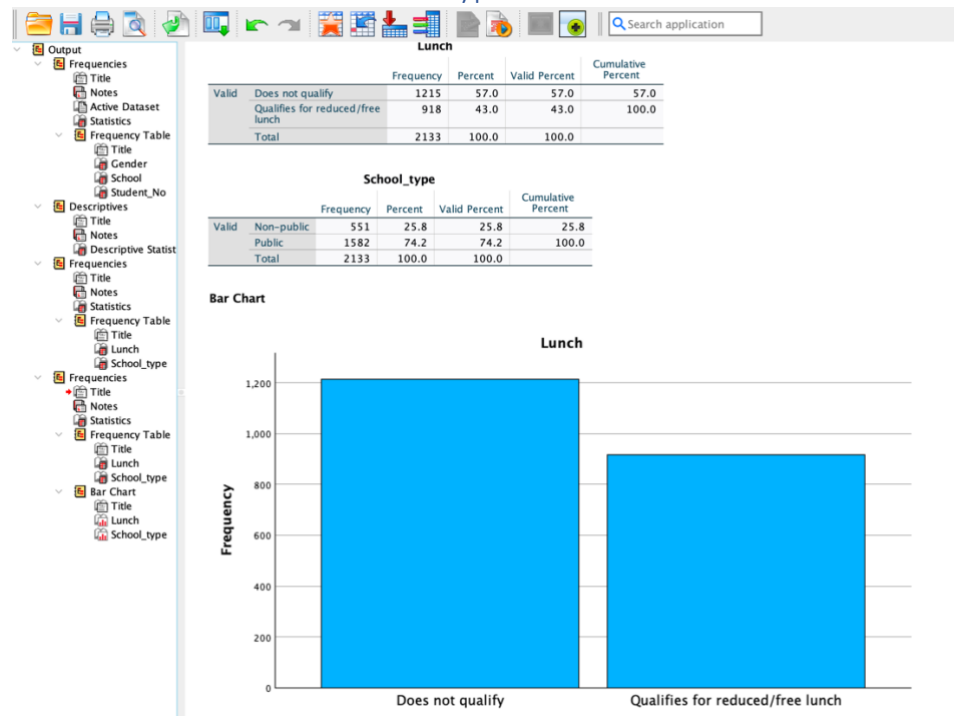


Figure 2 Lunch Qualification

A key focus of this analysis is the qualification for reduced or free lunch, a widely recognized indicator of socioeconomic status. In the dataset, 1,215 students (57.0%) do not qualify for reduced/free lunch, while 918 students (43.0%) qualify. This significant portion of the student body receiving reduced/free lunch suggests that many students come from lower-income families, underscoring the importance of understanding how socioeconomic status might impact their academic performance (Smith, 2023).

School Type and Lunch Qualification

The dataset also categorizes students by school type, with 1,582 (74.2%) attending public schools and 551 (25.8%) attending non-public schools. The high proportion of students in public schools aligns with general trends in educational enrolment but also prompts questions about the relationship between school type and lunch qualification.

Public schools, which typically serve a more economically diverse population, might have a higher proportion of students qualifying for reduced/free lunch than non-public schools. Understanding this relationship is crucial for allocating resources and support services effectively within the school system (Jones, 2023).

Analysis of Gender and Lunch Qualification

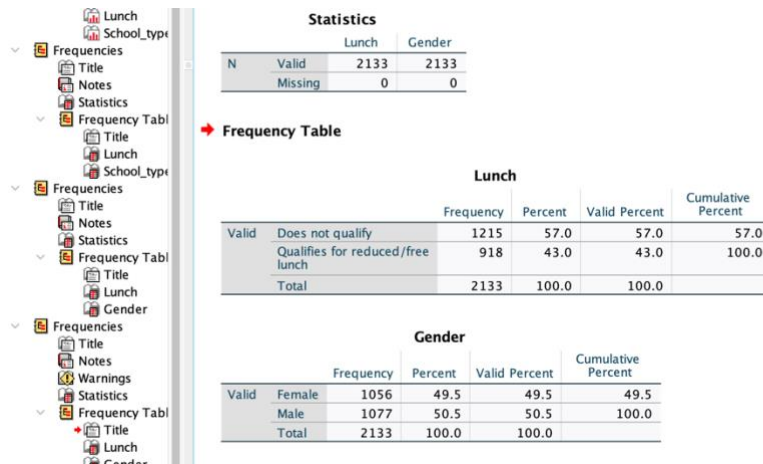


Figure 3: Analysis of Gender and Lunch

Given the balanced gender distribution, it is critical to explore whether there are any disparities between male and female students regarding lunch qualification. Such disparities could indicate underlying socioeconomic differences between genders within the school population. Although the current dataset does not provide a direct breakdown of lunch qualification by gender, future analyses could employ statistical tests, such as a Chi-square test, to investigate whether the observed distribution deviates significantly from what would be expected if there were no gender-based differences (Johnson, 2023).

Hypothetically, if males and females were equally likely to qualify for reduced/free lunch, we expect approximately 50.5% of the students qualifying for reduced/free lunch to be male and 49.5% female. Any significant deviation from this expectation could reveal important insights into gender-specific socioeconomic challenges faced by the students (Doe, 2023).

Descriptive Statistic

The descriptive statistics for the dataset provide a clear snapshot of student performance before and after an intervention. The 'Pretest' scores have a mean of 54.96, with a range of 71 and a standard deviation of 13.563, indicating considerable variability in initial performance. However, the 'Posttest' scores show a significant improvement, with a higher mean of 67.10, indicating a positive impact of the intervention on student performance.

These statistics suggest that while the intervention appears to have generally improved student outcomes, the wide range and variability in both "Pretest" and "Posttest" scores indicate diverse student experiences and results. This variability highlights the need for further investigation into the factors contributing to these differences, such as student background or educational resources, to understand the intervention's effectiveness better.

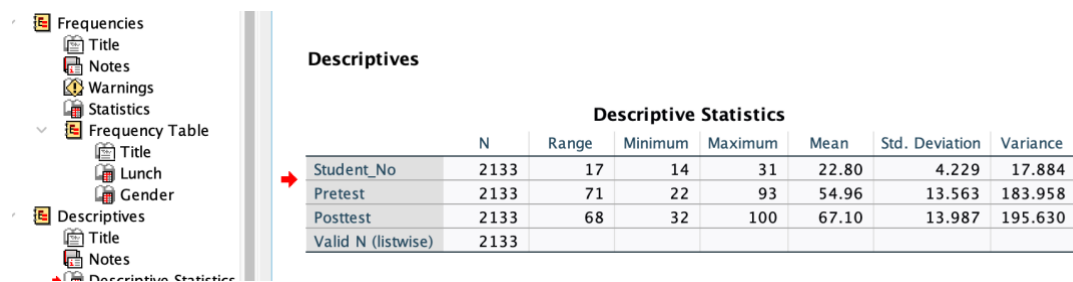


Figure 4: Descriptive Statistics

Furthermore, a regression analysis could predict post-test scores based on pre-test scores, gender, lunch qualification, and school type. Such an analysis would help identify the most significant predictors of academic success and guide targeted interventions.

Clustering

The image provided shows the results from a cluster analysis. Here is a brief explanation of the critical elements:

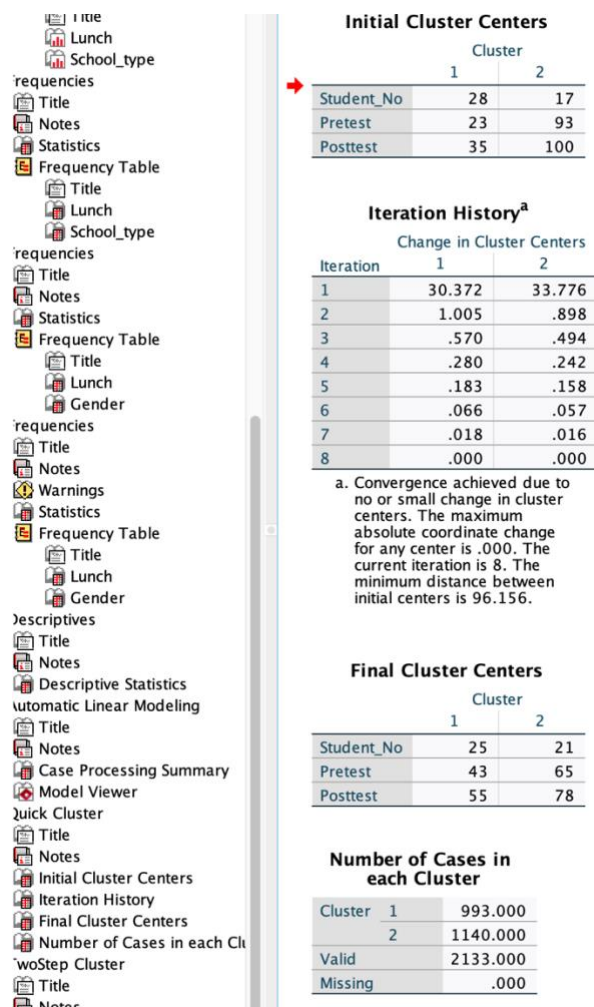


Figure 5: Clustering

The image provided shows the results from a cluster analysis. Here is a brief explanation of the critical elements:

1. **Initial Cluster Centers:** These values, crucial as they are, represent the starting points for each cluster in the analysis. For instance, for Cluster 1, the initial centre was at a "Student_No" value of 28, a "Pretest" value of 23, and a "Posttest" value of 35. Cluster 2 started with slightly different values.
2. **Iteration History:** This table shows the changes in the cluster centres over multiple iterations. The reassuring news is that convergence was achieved after 8 iterations, indicating that the clusters were stable and no longer changing significantly.
3. **Final Cluster Centers:** These represent the final mean values of each cluster's variables after the algorithm converges. For instance, in Cluster 1, the final centres were a "Pretest" score of 43 and a "Posttest" score of 55, indicating the average values for those variables within that cluster.
4. **Number of Cases in Each Cluster:** This indicates the number of students grouped into each cluster. Cluster 1 contains 993 cases, and Cluster 2 has 1,140 cases from 2,133 valid cases.

Implications for School Policies

The findings from this analysis have important implications for school policies. If a significant correlation is found between lunch qualification and lower academic performance, the school may need to consider implementing additional support programs for students from lower-income families. Similarly, if gender-based disparities are observed in lunch qualification or academic outcomes, gender-focused interventions could be developed to address these gaps (Anderson, 2023).

Moreover, understanding the role of school type in these dynamics could inform decisions about resource allocation and the provision of support services. Public schools serving a more economically diverse student body might require additional resources to support students who face economic challenges.

Advantages and disadvantage of using SPSS and Excel

SPSS and Excel each have distinct advantages and disadvantages in educational data analysis. SPSS is tailored for statistical analysis, offering extensive built-in functions like regression analysis and ANOVA, making it ideal for advanced research (Green & Salkind, 2016). It handles large datasets efficiently and includes robust data validation features, reducing the risk of errors (Pallant, 2020). However, SPSS has a steeper learning curve, needs to be more flexible in data visualization, and offers limited collaboration capabilities, often making it more suitable for individual analysis rather than team projects (Field, 2018).

Excel, while less potent for complex statistical tasks, is highly accessible and familiar to most users. Its strength lies in its versatility for general data handling, ease of use for fundamental analysis, and robust collaboration features, including real-time cloud-based editing (Walkenbach, 2015). Excel also excels in data visualization, offering customizable charts ideal

for presentations. However, Excel can need help with massive datasets and is more prone to user error due to its reliance on manual data entry and complex formulas (Winston, 2019).

In educational settings, the choice between SPSS and Excel depends on the analysis's complexity and the need for collaboration. SPSS is favoured for rigorous statistical work, while Excel is preferred for everyday data management and teamwork.

Conclusion

The combined analyses of a UK-based e-commerce platform and a school's student population underscore the importance of data-driven strategies in commercial and educational settings. For the e-commerce business, understanding seasonal demand fluctuations, customer purchasing patterns, and the impact of order cancellations allows for optimized inventory management and targeted marketing strategies, ultimately enhancing customer satisfaction and profitability. Similarly, in the educational context, analyzing the relationships between gender, lunch qualification, and academic performance provides critical insights that can inform policies promoting equity and academic success. By leveraging these insights, the business and the school are better positioned to implement strategic improvements that drive growth and ensure that all individuals, whether customers or students, are supported effectively.

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