The Influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Hedonists and Utilitarians: A Study of Shopping Behavior from Slovakia

Katarína Čuláková[1] – Kristína Bilková – František Križan

The Influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Hedonists and Utilitarians: A Study of Shopping Behavior from Slovakia. One of the most affected areas by the COVID-19 pandemic was consumer shopping behavior due to various retail restrictions, leading to panic buying and stockpiling. This study examines the changes in shopping habits of hedonistic and utilitarian consumers in Slovakia from 2019 to 2022, focusing on stockpiling, impulse and online shopping. Results indicate a pandemic-driven increase in stockpiling for both groups of consumers, with utilitarians returning to pre-pandemic behavior post-restrictions, while hedonists adapted to new behaviors. Impulse shopping increased for both groups during the pandemic, more sharply and persistently among hedonists. Online shopping grew by approximately 10% for both groups with hedonists maintaining higher levels of online shopping post-pandemic, while utilitarians gradually returned to pre-pandemic levels. The results suggest a different adaptation to the "new normal" in the case of hedonists and utilitarians. The study highlights the necessity of understanding consumer shopping behavior during crises to better handle future situations.

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Introduction

The shopping behavior of consumers changes in time and space and is affected by various factors, both external (such as economic conditions, technological innovations, and cultural norms) and internal factors (including personal values, attitudes, and motivations). Among the most used conceptual frameworks in consumer research are those of the hedonist and the utilitarian consumer shopping behavior (Babin et al. 1994; Wagner – Rudolph 2010; Scarpi 2020), and it is specifically this understanding of hedonistic and utilitarian values that

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are considered key to understanding consumer shopping behavior (Scarpi 2020; Mahakunajirakul 2022). Recent studies also emphasize the role of self-identification in shaping these orientations, where consumers classify themselves based on their responses to contrasting statements such as "Shopping is fun" versus "Shopping is difficult and unpleasant" (Michael – Chandrasekaran 2020). This self-categorization provides a practical tool for segmenting consumer markets and tailoring marketing strategies accordingly. Moreover, research suggests that these orientations are not static but may shift depending on situational context, product category, or life stage of consumer (Jones et al. 2006; Arnold – Reynolds 2003). Understanding the fluidity between hedonic and utilitarian motives is therefore essential for capturing the nuances of consumer behavior in the current retail landscape.

From the perspective of external factors, the global Covid-19 pandemic has had the highest influence on the changed patterns of consumer shopping behavior (Hartono et al. 2021; Čuláková et al. 2022; Markovič et al. 2022; Park et al. 2022; Seth 2020; Truong – Truong, 2022; Gupta et al. 2023; Stanca et al. 2023) in recent years, and did so regardless of which concept the consumer behavior approximates. However, the influence of the pandemic on shopping preferences and decisions could vary based on attitudes, lifestyles, or values, and hence the prevalence of hedonistic or utilitarian shopping behavior. This unprecedented situation forced many consumers to reconsider their shopping priorities, reshaping their behavior in both expected and unexpected ways. Disruptions in product availability, increased safety concerns, and intensified emotional responses all contributed to a redefinition of how consumers approached shopping and consumption. The question is whether different segments of consumers (e.g., hedonists vs. utilitarians) responded similarly to the pandemic or whether they made specific changes in their shopping behavior. Moreover, especially in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, consumer behavior may reflect deeper psychological mechanisms. Decisions to shop impulsively or shift to online platforms, for instance, may not only be responses to external constraints, but also attempts to regain a sense of autonomy, control, and emotional balance. In this light, the act of consumption becomes not just practical, but also a means of coping and self-regulation, driven by internal psychological needs (cf. Deci – Ryan 1985).

The hedonistic concept encompasses consumption that is manifested as pleasure and entertainment (Babin et al. 1994). Research has shown that hedonic consumption is closely tied to emotional gratification, personal pleasure, and symbolic meaning, often driven by the consumer's own desire for positive experiences and psychological satisfaction (Batra – Ahtola 1991). In other words, hedonistic consumers seek pleasure when shopping. Their consumption is more focused on a need or desire, with little or no consideration given to

whether they actually need what they are buying, or if shopping is merely a way to improve their mood. In hedonistic behavior, emotions prevail over rationality (Hashmi et al. 2020); thus, hedonistic consumers seek pleasure and a social event (experience) when shopping (Mahakunajirakul 2022). The shopping values of hedonistic consumers are often considered incompatible with sustainable fashion consumption (Razzaq et al. 2018).

On the other hand, Utilitarians focus their consumption on practical value and usefulness, often making decisions based on whether they really need what they are buying. They want to reduce the time they spend shopping and are thinking more rationally. For them, shopping is a necessary task that has to be done (Babin et al. 1994; Scarpi 2012). Utilitarian consumers are concerned with the consequences, rationality and benefits of their purchase (Mahakunajirakul 2022). Such shopping is also called purposeful shopping or utilitarian shopping and is often pre-planned and focused on the price and availability of goods (Spilková 2012).

These two concepts may overlap, and consumer may approach one or the other in different aspects of his or her life under the influence of different situations. In our study, we focused on the shopping behavior of hedonists and utilitarians during the Covid-19 pandemic, using consumers from Slovakia as an example. The aim of the study is to assess the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on selected changes in consumers' shopping behavior in the context of their shopping attitudes. We focused our attention on shopping to stock up, impulsive shopping and using the Internet for shopping before and during the Covid-19 pandemic (2019–2022). The main research problem identified based on the current state of knowledge is the need to empirically study the association of the pandemic on changes with consumer shopping behavior based on different segmentations, in our case, hedonists and utilitarians.

Research problem: The Covid-19 pandemic and the shopping behavior of hedonists and utilitarians

The restrictions resulting from Covid-19 pandemic led to limitations on social activities, including shopping (Ahmed et al. 2020; Ali Taha et al. 2021; Cruz-Cárdenas et al. 2021). The pandemic led to various restrictions in the retail sector, including closing shops or alterations to their opening hours, possible limitations on the number of customers allowed per sales area, and others (Lopes – Reis 2021; Lichter – Malý 2023). These restrictions led to concerns about shortages and the subsequent stockpiling, and panic buying (Hall et al. 2020; Islam et al. 2021; Keane – Neal 2021; Taylor 2021), which occurred in about one-third of Slovak consumers during the Covid-19 pandemic (Čuláková et al. 2022). The analysis of different shopping patterns of hedonists and

utilitarians, particularly regarding stocking up during the Covid-19 pandemic, is an area of research that has not yet been explored. Therefore, we focused our research on testing the following hypothesis:

H01: There are no statistically significant differences in consumers' attitudes to stockpiling regarding their segmentation into hedonists and utilitarians.

Dynamic changes in the retail sector and the anti-pandemic measures taken in response to the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus affected consumer shopping behavior. Despite retailers' and governments' reassurances that there were sufficient goods in stores and no evident signs of shortages, consumers began to purchase products impulsively and frequently without hesitation (Barnes et al. 2021). In addition to panic buying, fears of a potential shortage also led to so-called impulsive shopping (Gutierrez 2004), which is shopping without thinking about the need; it is an immediate and unintended urge to buy a product (Parsad et al. 2019; Zaltman 2003). Although many academic studies have examined impulsive shopping (Naeem 2021; Parsad et al. 2019), there is still no detailed and systematic analysis on consumer attitudes towards shopping in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, one of the authors' tasks is to test the following hypothesis:

H02: There are no statistically significant differences in consumers' impulsive shopping behavior regarding their segmentation into hedonists and utilitarians.

The pandemic led to a so-called "new normal" in shopping behavior (Wang et al. 2020), which is also characterised by a more notable transition of consumers from brick-and-mortar to online shopping (Al-Hattami 2021; Sikos – Kovács 2022; Svatosova 2022; Soares et al. 2023). Experience from Slovakia suggests that for food purchases, an increase in online purchases was observed for 20% of consumers. However, whether the shift to the online space affected all consumers to the same extent and how hedonists and utilitarians reacted to this new trend has not yet been verified. Therefore, we also tested the following hypothesis:

H03: There are no statistically significant differences in the use of the Internet for shopping regarding the segmentation of consumers into hedonists and utilitarians.

Data and methods

The analysed data comes from GfK Slovakia's (now YouGov CP Slovakia) In-Home Scanning of the household panel, which involves close cooperation with

households (for more detailed information about respondents see Table 1). The data is a representative sample of households in Slovakia. GfK obtains the data through regular barcode scanning of all household purchases, carried out by participating households using handheld scanners or mobile applications provided by GfK. In addition to these scanning activities, GfK regularly conducts surveys focused on various questions related to shopping behavior. Our input data originates from these surveys. This cross-selectional data collection started in 2012 and is still ongoing. The unique data makes it possible to study consumer shopping behavior changes over time and space. GfK is a market research agency and voluntarily complies with the Code of ESOMAR, the international association of market research agencies. Each respondent's participation in the panel is voluntary, and their selection is based on the representativeness of the sample of households in Slovakia. The classification of consumers into hedonists and utilitarians is based on their views on the following contrasting statements: A) Shopping is fun vs. B) Shopping is difficult and unpleasant. Respondents favouring statement A) were identified as hedonists; in the opposite case, they were classified as utilitarians. This self-identification approach is consistent with established consumer behavior research, which recognizes hedonic and utilitarian orientations as distinct motivational dimensions influencing shopping decisions (Scarpi 2020; Michael – Chandrasekaran 2020, Čuláková et al. 2022).

Respondents expressed their views on shopping on a 5-point Likert scale (1-strongly agree, 2-rather agree, 3-neither agree nor disagree, 4-rather disagree, 5-strongly disagree). We analysed 6 statements, which we divided into three groups (A: shopping to stock up, B: impulsive shopping, C: using the Internet when shopping):

A1: I buy what I need every day.

A2: I usually buy everyday goods when to stock up.

B1: I make quick decisions at the point of purchase.

B2: When shopping for everyday products, I also buy products that I did not plan to buy.

C1: I regularly use the Internet to find special offers on everyday products.

C2: I regularly use the Internet to find information about everyday products.

Table 1: **Selected characteristics of the respondents**

		2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of respondents		2,605	3,928	4,178	3,827
Hedonists (%)		70.7	72.4	71.7	67.7
Size of household (%)	1 member	15.8	21.9	26.9	24.8
	2 membered	34.6	34.0	29.2	28.7
	3-4 members	41.3	37.1	37.3	39.6
	5 or more members	8.3	7.0	6.6	6.8
School/ education of head of household (%)	without a high school diploma	27.3	25.4	24.9	24.5
	with a high school diploma	44.3	46.5	46.9	46.5
	university	28.4	28.1	28.2	28.9
Age of head of household (%)	up to 34 years	22.7	27.8	26.4	21.5
	35-44	28.4	29.7	28.9	29.0
	45-54	19.4	19.6	21.0	22.7
	55-64	15.2	12.9	13.4	14.7
	65 and over	14.3	10.1	10.3	12.1
Population size of the residence (%)	up to 999	13.6	13.0	12.6	13.2
	1,000-4,999	26.3	26.8	27.0	27.3
	5,000-19,999	17.3	17.5	17.9	17.3
	20,000-99,999	30.7	30.0	30.5	30.1
	100,000 and more	12.0	12.7	12.1	12.0

Source: GfK Slovakia, own processing.

We compared the shopping attitudes of hedonists and utilitarians using the Mann-Whitney U test in the IBM SPSS program (Gaur – Gaur 2006). To determine the influence of the pandemic on changes in shopping behavior, a time series of surveys from 2019[2], 2020, 2021 and 2022 was used to assess changes in attitudes towards shopping among selected groups of consumers. Due to the anonymisation of the data, it is impossible to compare changes in attitudes towards shopping on an individual level. Still, due to the uniform nature of the questionnaire, trends in shopping behavior can be analysed using the example of consumers from Slovakia.

[2] We consider 2019 as a pre-pandemic year because there was no pandemic in Slovakia (and globally until December) during this year.

Results

In the first part of the study, we focused on the topic of shopping to stock up. Respondents responded to the statements – A: I buy what I need every day and B: I typically buy everyday goods when stocking up – and based on them, we tested the following hypotheses (Table 2):

H01A: There is no statistically significant difference in consumers' attitudes to the statement "I buy what I need every day" regarding their segmentation into hedonists and utilitarians.

H01B: There is no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of consumers responding to the statement "I typically buy everyday goods when stocking up" regarding their segmentation into hedonists and utilitarians.

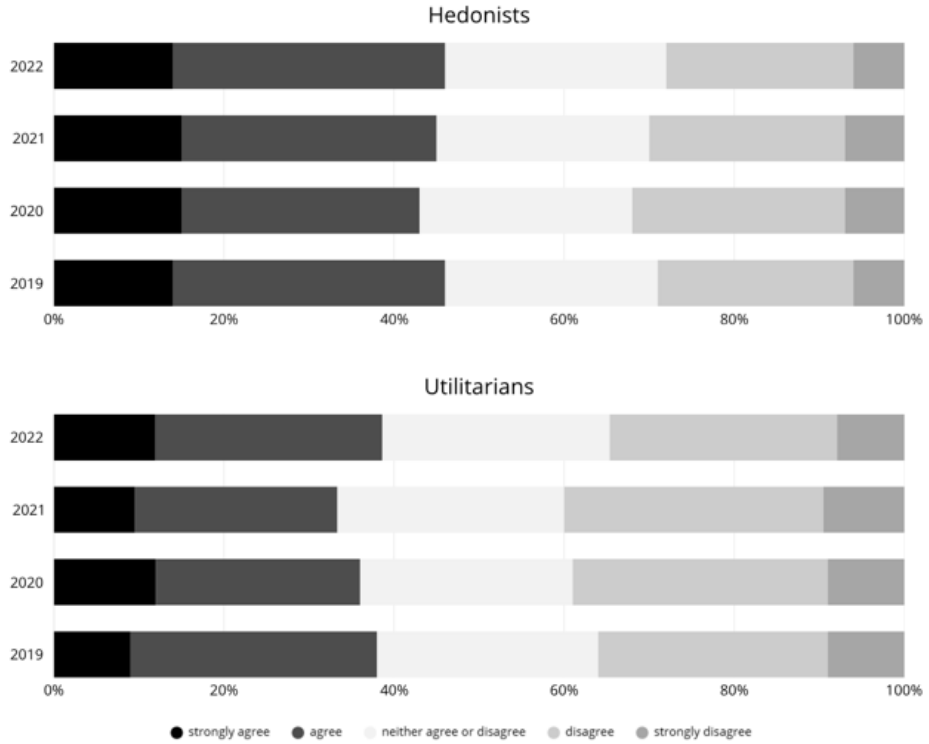
Table 2: **Testing hypotheses H01A and H01B**

Hypothesis	p-value (2019)	p-value (2020)	p-value (2021)	p-value (2022)
H01A	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000
H01B	0.073	0.012	0.214	0.044

Notes: tested using Mann-Whitney U test (alpha=0.05 level of significance)
Data source: GfK Slovakia, own processing.

The results indicate that, in the case of H01A, statistically significant differences were found between the attitudes of hedonists and utilitarians throughout the period (Table 2). In the case of the second hypothesis, H01B, these were borderline values in 2019 (p=0.073), while in 2021, no statistically significant relationship was confirmed between the attitudes of hedonists and utilitarians to the statement "I typically buy everyday goods when stocking up" (p=0.214). This was the year with the highest incidence of Covid-19 and the most extensive anti-pandemic measures in the retail sector, which may have led to the similar attitudes of these two groups of consumers. In general, almost half of the hedonists (42.7–46.1%) agreed (strongly or rather) with the statement " I buy what I need every day" between 2019 and 2022 (Figure 1), while lower values of agreement were confirmed (34.7–38.9%) for the utilitarians. At the same time, utilitarians were less likely to buy what they needed on a daily basis during the pandemic. This is indicated by the decrease in positive answers between 2019–2021 and the subsequent increase in 2022, after the pandemic and when the anti-pandemic measures had been discontinued.

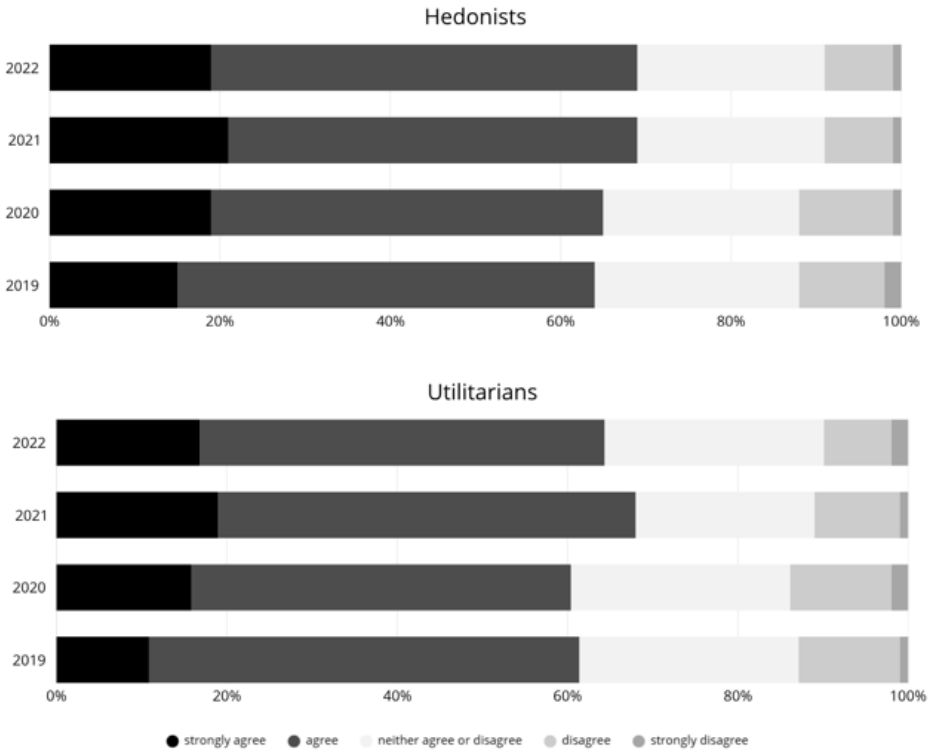
Figure 1: **Attitudes of hedonists and utilitarians to the statement "I buy what I need every day" in 2019–2022**



Data source: GfK Slovakia, own processing.

Therefore, both hedonists and utilitarians shopped more to stock up during the Covid-19 pandemic (Figure 2). In the case of hedonists, there is a continuous increase in positive responses from 2019–2022 (64.3/65.1/68.3/68.8%), while utilitarians showed a different pattern of shopping behavior. In the first year of the pandemic (2020), they had not yet changed their shopping behavior when stocking up compared to the pre-pandemic period (2019). Utilitarians only started to stock up to a greater extent in 2021. In that year, no statistically significant difference was observed between the shopping behavior of hedonists and utilitarians (Table 2). With the end of the rapid spread of the virus and the lifting of the most restrictive anti-pandemic measures in 2022, the increased stockpiling of utilitarians (as opposed to hedonists) generally ceased. However, some of them adapted to this new normal.

Figure 2: **Attitudes of hedonists and utilitarians to the statement "I typically buy everyday goods when stocking up" in 2019–2022**



Data source: GfK Slovakia, own processing.

To identify differences in the impulsive shopping between hedonists and utilitarians in the years 2019–2022, we tested the following hypotheses in the context of H02 (Table 3):

H02A: There is no statistically significant difference in consumers' attitudes towards the statement: "I make quick decisions at the point of purchase" regarding their segmentation into hedonists and utilitarians.

H02B: There is no statistically significant difference in consumers' attitudes towards the statement: "When shopping for everyday products, I also buy products that I did not plan to buy" regarding their segmentation into hedonists and utilitarians.

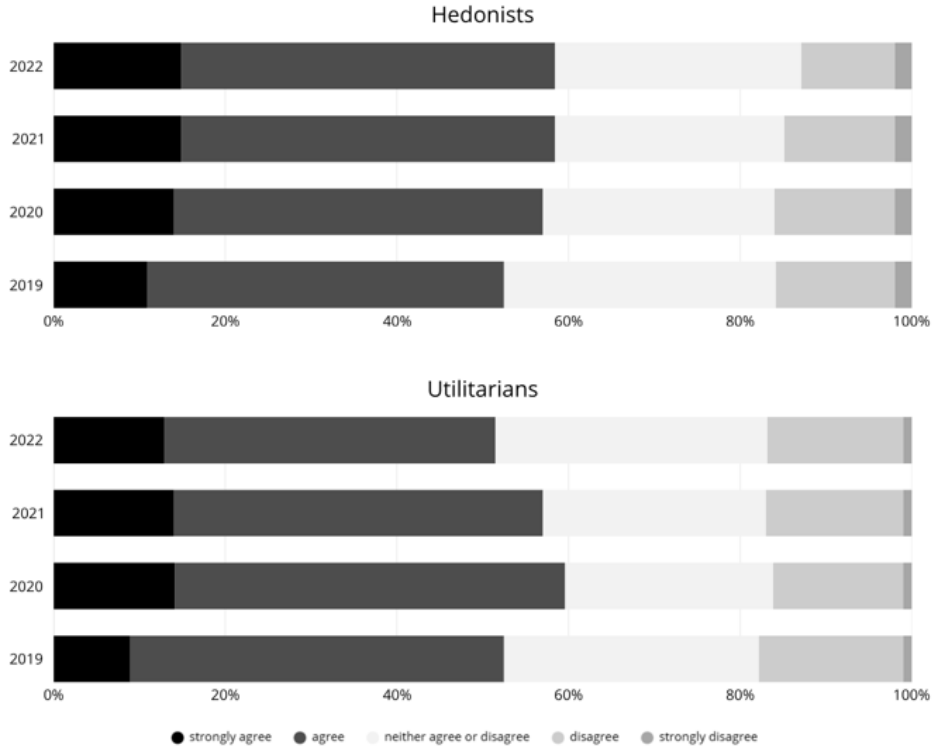
Table 3. **Testing hypotheses H02A and H02B**

Hypothesis	p-value (2019)	p-value (2020)	p-value (2021)	p-value (2022)
H02A	0.832	0.658	0.213	0.000
H02B	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Notes: tested using Mann-Whitney U test (alpha=0.05 level of significance)
Data source: GfK Slovakia, own processing.

Analysis of the data did not confirm a statistically significant relationship between the attitudes of hedonists and utilitarians to the statement "I make rapid decisions at the point of purchase" (Table 3). The exception is the year 2022, for which it can be noted that more than half of hedonists and equally also utilitarians agree (partially or completely) with the statement that they make rapid decisions at the point of purchase. At the same time, the pandemic does not seem to have any association with their decision-making (Figure 3).

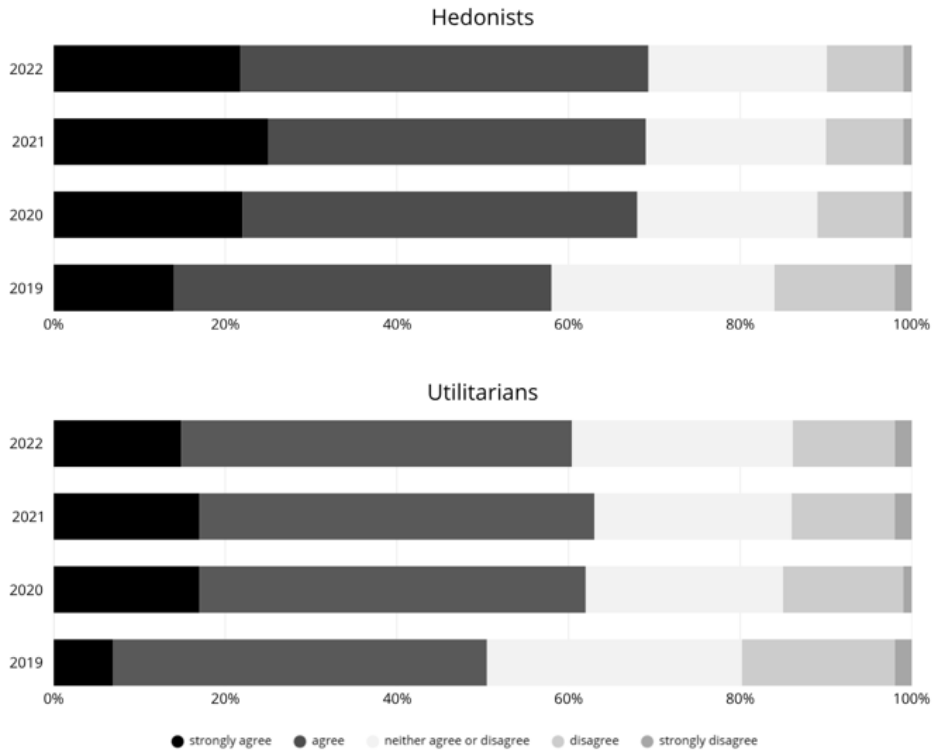
Figure 3: **Attitudes of hedonists and utilitarians to the statement "I make rapid decisions at the point of purchase" in 2019–2022**



Data source: GfK Slovakia, own processing.

Differences between the examined categories of consumers were identified with the other analysed statements (Figure 4). In the pre-pandemic period (2019), 58% of hedonists and 50% of utilitarians made impulse purchases. During the pandemic period (2020–2021), the proportion of positive responses to the statement about recognising impulse buying increased by 10 percentage points, and by 13 percentage points for utilitarians in 2021. There is also a slight decrease, to a value of 61%, which can also be seen in impulsive buying among utilitarians in 2022 related to the aftermath of the pandemic, which may indicate a gradual return to the old normal, for example, a return to pre-pandemic shopping habits. Hedonists, however, also show an increase in impulsive buying in 2022, with almost 70% of affirmative responses (Figure 4).

Figure 4: **Attitudes of hedonists and utilitarians to the statement "When shopping for everyday products, I also buy products that I did not plan to buy" in 2019–2022**



Data source: GfK Slovakia, own processing.

From the results so far, it is evident that the Covid-19 pandemic has had an influence on the increased use of the Internet for shopping. What is questionable is whether this trend manifested itself in the same way for hedonists and utilitarians. Therefore, we also tested the following hypotheses in the context of H03 (Table 4):

H03A: There is no statistically significant difference in consumers' attitudes to the statement: "I regularly use the Internet to find special offers on everyday products" regarding their segmentation into hedonists and utilitarians.

H03B: There is no statistically significant difference in consumers' attitudes to the statement: "I regularly use the Internet to find information about everyday products" regarding their segmentation into hedonists and utilitarians.

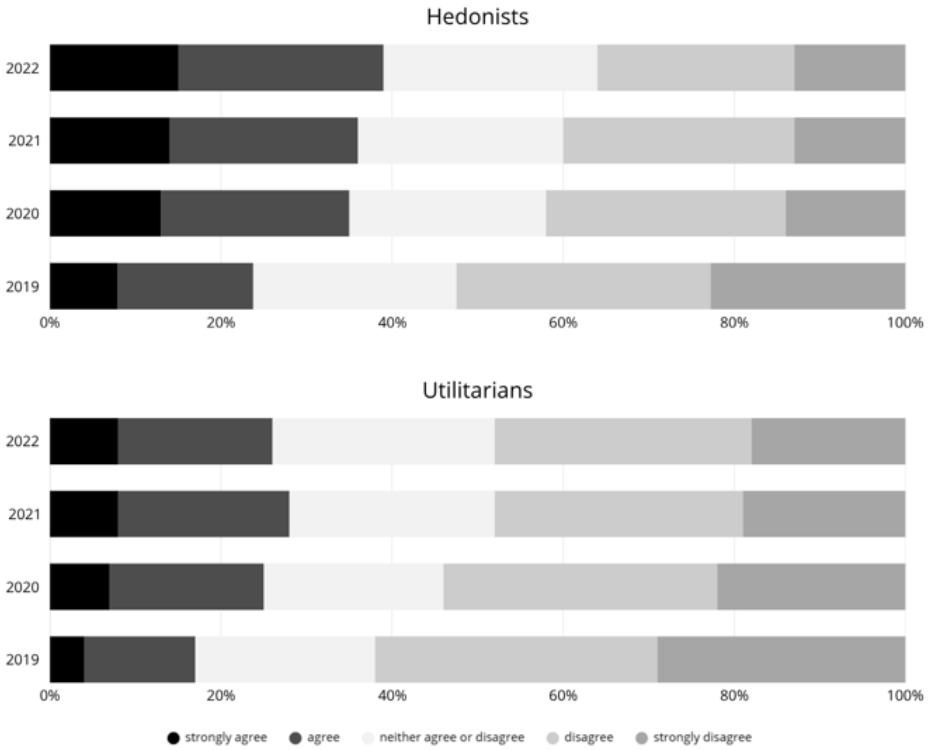
Table 4: **Testing hypotheses H03A and H03B**

Hypothesis	**p-value (2019)**	**p-value (2020)**	**p-value (2021)**	**p-value (2022)**
H03A	0.007	0.000	0.000	0.000
H03B	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Notes: tested using Mann-Whitney U test (alpha=0.05 level of significance)
Data source: GfK Slovakia, own processing.

For both statements focusing on the use of the Internet for shopping during the Covid-19 pandemic statistically significant differences between hedonists and utilitarians were confirmed. In the case of the first statement, "I regularly use the Internet to find special offers on everyday products", there was an increase in positive responses (totally or partially agree) of around 12 percentage points for hedonists and 8 percentage points for utilitarians during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic (2020), reaching 35% and 25% respectively (Figure 5). The trend towards an increasing proportion of consumers regularly using the Internet to find special offers on everyday goods continued in 2021 (hedonists 36% and utilitarians 28% of affirmative responses). However, with the gradual reduction of anti-pandemic measures, there is a decrease in the number of utilitarians with positive responses, to a value of 26%, while the number of hedonists giving a positive answer increase to 39% in 2022.

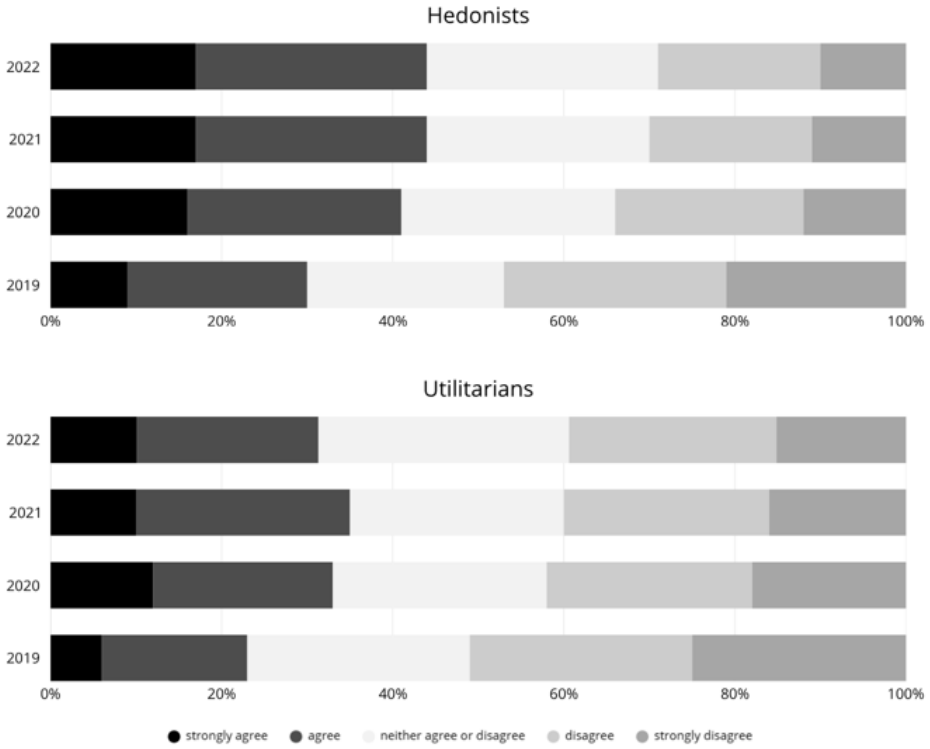
Figure 5: **Attitudes of hedonists and utilitarians to the statement "I regularly use the Internet to find special offers for everyday products" in 2019–2022**



Data source: GfK Slovakia, own processing.

An analysis of the responses to the next statement also shows similar results: "I regularly use the Internet to find information about everyday products" (Figure 6). The Covid-19 pandemic led to an increase in the use of the Internet to find information about everyday products by about 10 percentage points for both hedonists and utilitarians. However, in the case of utilitarians, a gradual decrease in positive responses can be observed in 2022 as a result of a possible return to the original shopping behavior. Hedonists, on the other hand, are more likely to adapt to new forms of shopping behavior, even after the anti-pandemic measures for the retail sector have been lifted. It should be noted that it was in this third set of statements, focusing on the use of the Internet for shopping, that the most significant difference was found between the fully positive responses of hedonists and utilitarians. This difference was up to twice as high for hedonists as for utilitarians.

Figure 6: **Attitudes of hedonists and utilitarians to the statement " I regularly use the Internet to find information about everyday products" in 2019–2022**



Data source: GfK Slovakia, own processing.

Conclusion and discussion

The Covid-19 pandemic brought many changes to our daily lives (Eisenmann et al. 2021; Andrade et al. 2022; Shek et al. 2023; Smolić et al. 2023; Sielaff et al. 2024; Survilaite et al. 2025). Managing with various crises (such as Covid-19), characterised by emotional challenges, often leads to responsible hedonic consumption (Amatulli et al. 2023; Veselovská 2023). These changes manifested themselves differently in each country, as did their impact on various sectors of the economy (Iancu et al. 2022; Michálek 2023; Chetty et al. 2024). The pandemic also affected shopping due to various retail restrictions (Das et al. 2022; Truong – Truong 2022; Stanca et al. 2025). Pandemic-driven shifts in shopping behavior can be interpreted through Self-Determination Theory as attempts to satisfy autonomy, competence, and relatedness, with hedonistic and utilitarian values shaping how consumers adapted. The pandemic significantly

impacted shopping habits, with consumers shifting towards purchasing essential goods. Due to the perception of the crisis, there was an increase in so-called "exigency motivation" - the motivation to purchase necessary products during a crisis, often beyond the original functionality of the products. This motivation, combined with utilitarian motivation, significantly increased the purchase of essential goods, while purchases of non-essential and luxury products declined. The impact of the pandemic crisis on consumer behavior was driven more by individuals' perception of the crisis than by the strictness of government measures, which had a minimal effect on shopping behavior (Vázquez-Martínez et al. 2021). Consequently, the shopping behavior of hedonists and utilitarians differed in many cases.

In the early days, there was a great deal of fear and uncertainty, as retail-related measures were often chaotic and short-lived (Bilková et al. 2024). These factors, together with the fear of contagion, led to panic buying by many consumers (Chen et al. 2025). In Slovakia, more than a third of consumers were affected by panic buying and the related stockpiling (Čuláková et al. 2022). Research has confirmed that panic buying differs among different consumer groups (generations) in Slovakia during the pandemic (Čuláková et al. 2025). Observing the different attitudes of consumers, the number of daily purchases decreased for both hedonists and utilitarians, but more significantly for utilitarians who tend to avoid unnecessary outings and aim for efficient, low-contact shopping experiences. Experience from other countries also links panic buying to a hedonistic approach (Aruldoss et al. 2024; Lavuri et al. 2023). Due to the decrease in daily purchases during the pandemic, we can expect an increase in stockpiling purchases. Shopping to stock up showed small differences in the study period (2019–2022). Therefore, we assume that other factors influence shopping behavior than consumers' attitudes. The Covid-19 pandemic also had an influence on the increase in stock-up shopping among Slovak consumers, but this shopping only partly depends on the segmentation of consumers into hedonists and utilitarians.

As with panic buying, there is also a relationship between the Covid-19 pandemic and impulsive shopping (Ahmed et al. 2020). Rapid decision-making at the point of purchase is common to both groups of consumers studied, and their attitudes towards shopping have an impact on impulsive shopping (Iyer et al. 2020). In Slovakia, impulsive shopping was more pronounced among utilitarians than among hedonists. However, even after the pandemic ended (2022), we observed an increased rate of impulsive shopping among them, as utilitarians gradually returned to the so-called old normal. This could possibly be associated with the easing of the pandemic restrictions and the “post-pandemic euphoria” among hedonists, or the emergence of other external factors influencing shopping behavior, such as the war in Ukraine. However, these claims

have not yet been verified by empirical research in Slovakia. Evidence from abroad indicates that hedonic shopping value is positively associated with impulsive buying tendencies (Aruldoss et al. 2024).

The increase in the importance of online shopping can be expected even without the global pandemic, although the pandemic acted as a catalyst for the use of online space and the development of online shopping (Beckers et al. 2021; Shaw et al. 2022). A study involving respondents from several countries confirmed that consumers became more experienced and confident in online shopping during the pandemic (Gu et al. 2021). The results of our analysis also confirm an increase in the use of the Internet for shopping among both hedonists and utilitarians during the pandemic.

However, we observe differences in the intensity of Internet use for shopping between hedonists and utilitarians, which is also confirmed by several foreign studies (Delafrooz et al. 2010; Scarpi 2021; Fülöp et al. 2023; Ma – Hwang 2024). Research from Slovakia documents a shift toward less frequent but larger purchases, as well as a significant growth in online shopping, reflecting the adaptation to pandemic conditions and changes in consumer priorities (Veselovská et al. 2021). Among hedonists, the increase is more pronounced and continues even after the pandemic, while among utilitarians there has been a gradual return to the old normal during this period. From the point of view of online shopping, it is difficult to say whether one group of consumers is better off than the other. As hedonists were unable to satisfy their shopping needs due to closed shops or other measures, they used online shopping as a substitute for their usual in-store experiences and emotional gratification. For many utilitarians, on the other hand, the shift to the online environment may have given them quicker and easier access to a product without having to spend time physically shopping for it.

The results of the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on the shopping behavior of consumers in Slovakia can be summarised as follows:

- Both hedonists and utilitarians shopped more to stock up during the Covid-19 pandemic. Once the most stringent anti-pandemic measures were lifted, utilitarians stopped stocking up in 2022, while hedonists started stocking up more.
- More than half of both hedonists and utilitarians make quick decisions at the point of purchase. The pandemic had no effect on the difference in these consumers ' decisions.
- In the pre-pandemic period in 2019, 58% of hedonists and 50% of utilitarians made impulsive purchases, and during the pandemic, there was

a 10 percentage points increase in impulsive purchases, or 13 in the case of utilitarians. At the same time, there is a slight decrease in impulsive buying among utilitarians in 2022, associated with the aftermath of the pandemic, which may indicate a gradual return to the old normal. Hedonists also show an increase in impulsive shopping in 2022.

– The Covid-19 pandemic led to an increase in the use of the Internet for shopping by around 10 percentage points for both hedonists and utilitarians. However, utilitarians were less likely to shop online in 2022 than in 2021, while hedonists were more likely to do so. This may indicate a different adaptation to the so-called new normal for hedonists and utilitarians.

Knowledge of the shopping behavior of consumers during the Covid-19 pandemic is necessary for easier handling of future crisis situations. The pandemic caused a change in the shopping behavior of many consumers, and these new patterns of behavior and consumption habits persist to the present day (to a greater extent among hedonists). While numerous studies have examined the emergence of a 'new normal' in consumer shopping behavior following the Covid-19 pandemic, similar research in the Slovak context is limited. To date, no study has addressed this phenomenon in Slovakia. Therefore, our paper aimed not to analyse current post-pandemic shopping trends, but to capture and interpret changes that occurred specifically during the pandemic. By focusing on stockpiling, impulse buying and online shopping behavior between 2019 and 2022, this research offers insight into how consumers in Slovakia adapted their shopping habits under pandemic-related constraints. This contributes to a deeper understanding of behavioral shifts that may shape future retail dynamics. We are also aware of the limitations of the research. This is a case study conducted exclusively in a single country, while the anti-pandemic measures differed from country to country and may have had different effects on the changing consumer shopping patterns. Therefore, a comparative analysis will need to be based on broader contexts. Another limiting factor is the data used. It is a purposive selection of questions from large-scale research by GfK. The questions analysed do not completely cover the problems of consumer shopping behavior and the differences between hedonists and utilitarians. But they are specific, focusing just on the 3 issues analysed through the prism of six questions. This may lead to a reduced level of reliability of the research, and therefore, it is necessary to interpret the results in a broader and more cautious context and within the boundaries of these limiting factors. Opportunities for future research will be based on adapting to the new normal or a return to the

old normal, and this will involve identifying the temporary and permanent effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the changed shopping behavior of consumers. It should be noted that, on the one hand, there are likely to be general trends in changes in the consumer shopping behavior of different consumer groups that are unrelated to the pandemic. Nevertheless, they are characterised with the association with the pandemic. On the other hand, the pandemic may have acted as a catalyst for the already ongoing and previously unnoticed changes in consumer shopping behavior.

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