
Managing Perceived Legitimacy in Uncertain Times: The Effects of Long-Covid

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Uncertainty and unpredictability are the main characteristics of a crisis: the Covid-19 pandemic was definitely characterised by these two issues. During the Covid-19 pandemic, people experienced a very high level of fear that affected their behaviour in several dimensions of their lives, including their buying habits. Retailing was one of the most affected industries due to government health regulations and people's fears and emotions. In such tumultuous times, organizational legitimacy plays a crucial role since consumers tend to interact with legitimate organizations, avoiding companies that are not fulfilling their expectations and are not aligned with the accepted social norms. The objective of this research is to understand how uncertainty and crisis may affect consumer behaviour

taking into account their emotional conditioning. Specifically, we measured the impact on three different groups of people based on their relationship with the virus: those infected, those uninfected, and those with long-Covid sequelae. We conducted an empirical study in June 2022 on a sample of 515 individuals from the above groups. Our findings revealed that the effects of risk perception and legitimacy are significantly different and that these factors affect individuals purchase intention. The research findings contribute to consumer behaviour theories and offer practical insights for marketing professionals and policymakers in crisis situations.

Keywords: *legitimacy, uncertainty, Covid-19, long-Covid, purchase intention.*

Uncertainty and unpredictability are the main characteristics of a crisis: the Covid-19 pandemic was definitely characterised by these two issues (Zyznarska-Dworczak, 2022). During the Covid-19 pandemic, people experienced a very high level of fear that affects their behaviours in several dimensions of their lives (Blanco-González *et al.*, 2023; Ruobing, 2022; Escamilla-Solano *et al.*, 2023). Consumers faced various difficulties and abrupt changes in their lives, such as the lockdown and the social distancing measures (Yang *et al.*, 2021), products shortage in supermarkets, limited food and essential goods supply, cancellation of some services and the increase of the unemployment rate caused by several companies' bankruptcy (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020). Sales of some food and hygiene products increase (Laguna *et al.*, 2020) due to the circumstances and spread of impulsive buying behaviours (Cruz-Cárdenas *et al.*, 2021). However, sales of some products such as clothing (Laguna *et al.*, 2020), entertainment (Hall *et al.*, 2021) and travelling (Spurk and Straub, 2020; Chong *et al.*, 2020) decreased abruptly. Retailing was one of the most affected industries due to the governments health crisis regulations and people fears and emotions (Gupta *et al.*, 2023).

These changes in the consumers behaviour are typical during disruptive events such as natural disasters, terrorism, or epidemics (Cruz-Cárdenas *et al.*, 2021). Several studies analyse how consumers, in these situations, change their buying habits, buying great quantity of some products categories. In general, this type of behaviour occurs in panic situations (Islam *et al.*, 2021), and generate an increase in impulse purchases (Laato *et al.*, 2020). In fact, during health crisis consumers' life patterns and information processing change suddenly (Ahmed *et al.*, 2020): for example, online purchases are likely to increase since often consumers preferred virtual interactions rather than physical contacts (Nowland *et al.*, 2017).

Literature has shown how health epidemics influence both the purchasing behaviour of those who have suffered from the outbreak (direct influence) and the behaviour of people who have not suffered from it (indirect influence) due to the fear of contracting the disease (Díez-Martín *et al.*, 2022; Escamilla-Solano *et al.*, 2023). Not just the disease itself, but also the fear and uncertainty to get sick can modify people behaviour. Previous studies have analysed how a situation of uncertainty or crisis, such as the pandemic, may influences people behaviour (Cachón-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2021b; Díez-Martín *et al.*, 2022), however, scholars have not analysed how uncertainty and crisis may affect in different ways consumers behaviour taking into consideration their emotional conditioning. Scholars have recently highlighted the need to deepen investigate how consumer habits have changed and how retailers should handle this new context (Gupta *et al.*, 2023). More academic research with practical significance is claimed in order to help scholars, but also retailers and policymaker, to understand buying behaviour in extreme uncertain and crisis context, situation that we can call "panic buying" (Billore and Anisimova, 2021).

In this context, organizational legitimacy plays a very important role, since, even more in uncertain situations, consumers are willing to interact with legitimate organizations, avoiding companies that are not fulfilling their

expectations and are not aligned with the accepted social norms (Deephouse *et al.*, 2017; Díez-Martín *et al.*, 2022; Miotto and Youn, 2020). Legitimized companies tend to be more successful than those that are not (Glozer *et al.*, 2019) since they have better access to critical resources for their activity (Díez-Martín *et al.*, 2021), improve their credibility and trust (Bitektine and Haack, 2015; Díez-Martín *et al.*, 2022) and have the support of internal and external Castillo-Feito *et al.*, 2022).

The objective of this research is to analyse the impact of uncertainty during the pandemics and the legitimacy consumers' perception in the purchase intention, taking into consideration, as a variable, the consumer type of exposure to Covid-19. Specifically, we analysed consumers affected or not by Long-Covid. To achieve this objective, firstly, we defined a theoretical framework and we proposed several hypotheses; secondly, we described the sample and methodology and exposed the main results; finally, we highlighted implications, future lines and limitations of the study.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

UNCERTAINTY AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Academics have provided multiple evidence that situations of uncertainty cause negative, neutral, and positive changes in consumer behaviour and purchase intention (Minton, 2022). In uncertainty contexts people perceive a lack of security and trust that affect their buying behaviour (Shiu *et al.*, 2011). During the Covid-19 pandemics, consumers' habits changed to adapt to the new and unexpected situation (McKinsey, 2020). For example, in some countries, supermarkets ran out of toilet paper, hand sanitizer, and canned food products (Güngördü Belbağ, 2022). People felt an increase of their perceived severity, perceiving a high risk for their lives, they changed their buying habits, acquiring unusual quantity of some products to mitigate their fear (Laato *et al.*, 2020). There were several categories that became a priority: medical goods, alcohol for hygiene, antibacterial wet wipes, first aid kits, antiseptics, cold remedies and cough medicines (Diogo and Veiga, 2022), toilet paper, pasta, canned food and candles (Billore and Anisimova, 2021). The anxiety caused by uncertainty pushed consumer to react in a less rational way, getting into panic buying behaviours (Chua *et al.*, 2021). During the pandemic, the perceived increase of life risk increased impulse buying behaviour as well as obsessive-compulsive buying (Islam *et al.*, 2021).

At the other hand, the increase of consumers' risk perception negatively influences purchase intention of most of the products' categories (Yang *et al.*, 2016; Chen *et al.*, 2022). Generally speaking, uncertainty generates a negative impact on company sales (Doern, 2009; Hussain *et al.*, 2009) and more on SMEs than on large companies (Koh and Saad, 2006; Parnell *et al.*, 2015), since consumers chose the safer option (Zhang *et al.*, 2020) most of the time represented by larger companies with better contingencies plans and crisis management protocols (Parnell *et al.*, 2015). Bigger retailers could react quicker than SMEs to

the changes in the consumers' habits, creating online platforms and deliveries and implementing procedures that mitigate people anxiety (Cocchia, 2022). An uncertain context, directly and indirectly, influences consumers purchase intention (Islam and Hussain, 2022) since consumers control more their spendings to reduce the risk.

UNCERTAINTY, CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND ORGANISATIONAL LEGITIMACY

The consumers' legitimacy perception influences customers choices and the buying intention (Lortie *et al.*, 2022). Legitimacy is a critical element for business survival and success (Suchman, 1995; Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002), since legitimate organizations receive their licence to operate by the different stakeholders that approve their activities (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). The customers perception and the company's evaluation is also affected by the external environment (Payne *et al.*, 2021) and the firm's capability to manage the uncertain context (Cachón-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2021b). Legitimacy improves when companies behave appropriately and in accordance with the common social values (Deephouse *et al.*, 2017). When consumers perceive that a company is conforming with institutional norms, they are willing to grant it legitimacy and continue to support its activities within society (Valor *et al.*, 2021).

Legitimacy has a positive impact on long term relationships with customers (Liu *et al.*, 2020; Miotto and Youn, 2020; Payne *et al.*, 2021) and improve customer loyalty (Han, 2021; Guo *et al.*, 2013). When consumers perceive that a company is complying with institutional norms, they are willing to grant it legitimacy and continue to support its activities within society (Valor *et al.*, 2021). Loyal customers generate several advantages for the organization, such as sales increase, good reputation, engagement and positive word of mouth (Miotto *et al.*, 2020; Cachón-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2021b).

In uncertain times, such as during the Covid-19 pandemics, legitimacy judgments are influenced by a different perception of the reality (Zyznarska-Dworczak, 2022). Trust in the retailers' practices was more important than ever, since consumers' anxiety and fear could be managed only by the self-control granted by companies' best practices (Wandoko and Panggati, 2022). Uncertainty affects the consumer behaviour in different ways. People react differently to uncertainty, depending on their cognitive approaches (Cachón-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2021b). For example, during the pandemic, men and women acted differently when evaluating organizations' legitimacy. Facing high level of uncertainty, while cognitive evaluation criteria predominate in men, pragmatic evaluation criteria were more relevant in women (Díez-Martín *et al.*, 2022), according to the differences in the gender bias in the risk management approach (Bennouri *et al.*, 2018; Moreira *et al.*, 2019).

Emotions also generate behavioural changes among people. For example, anxiety influences consumer behaviour in uncertain context (Blanco-González *et al.*, 2023), such as an increase of purchase of basic products during the first weeks of the pandemic (Kemp *et al.*, 2021). External variables also may affect

consumer behaviour during crisis. During the mad cow health crisis, media highly affected consumers' purchasing intention, increasing the risk perception and fear (Penning *et al.*, 2002). During Covid-19 pandemic, media, and, most of all, social media, highly influenced consumer behaviours, incrementing the effect of anxiety and emotions in people buying habits specifically in retailing (Moldes *et al.*, 2022).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Galoni *et al.* (2022) showed that the uncertainty caused by the spread disease affects people emotionally accordingly with their relationship with the virus, confirming Dean *et al.* (2019)'s theory that determines that uncertainty highly affects people with chronic disease (such as Long-Covid). According to these assumptions, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- *Hypothesis 1. Uncertainty influences purchase intention depending on the type of exposure to Covid-19.*

In a context of uncertainty, legitimacy judgments depend on the grade of the uncertainty perception (Payne *et al.*, 2021). Consumers' perceptions are positive when companies behave in an acceptable way (Bitektine and Haack, 2015), since individuals connect and support corporations with which they share values and beliefs (Blanco-González *et al.*, 2020; Cachón-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2021a). For this reason, companies that aligned their behaviour with the socially shared norms and values and fulfil customers' expectations could control the sales decrease (Ashrafi *et al.*, 2020; Díez-Martín *et al.*, 2021). The impact of uncertainty was compensated by the perceived legitimacy.

As previously said, the legitimacy perception is influenced by the stakeholders' emotional states (Suchman, 1995; Ashforth and Mael, 1996; Thomas and Lamm, 2012; Blanco-González *et al.*, 2020). During the Covid-19 pandemic people experienced very high level of stress and emotional challenges (Grigore *et al.*, 2020). Like uncertainty, legitimacy also influences the purchase intention (Guo *et al.*, 2013; Lee and Shin, 2010; Payne *et al.*, 2021). If the legitimacy perception is positive, the company will count on the consumer support, and have the possibility to increase their sales (Kim and Ha, 2020) and improve customer loyalty (Ozdora-Aksak and Atakan-Duman, 2016). According to these statements, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- *Hypothesis 2. Perceived legitimacy influences purchase intention based on the type of exposure to Covid-19.*

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To test the hypotheses, we carried out an empirical study with a sample of 521 people: 121 Long-Covid (with sequelae generated by Covid-19), 200 people who have overcome Covid-19 without sequelae, and 200 people who have not contracted the Covid-19 to the date of the study. To segment the sample groups,

we incorporated a validated battery of questions about the effects of Long-Covid (Fernández-de-las-Peñas, 2022; Fernández-de-las-Peñas *et al.*, 2021). In collaboration with a specialized market research company and a group of experts in Long Covid (<https://www.longcovid.eu/>), before collecting the information, we performed a pre-test with a sample of 50 people to validate the questionnaire. Subsequently, the specialized market research company sent the online surveys in June 2022 in Spain with the objective representative sample of the population. Table 1 presents the profile of the sample.

Table 1. Sample profile

	Long-Covid	Covid	No Covid
Gender	Male: 50% Female: 50%	Male: 49% Female: 51%	Male: 50% Female: 50%
Age	18-34: 28% 35-44: 22% 45-54: 20% 55-65: 17% > 66: 13%	18-34: 30% 35-44: 21% 45-54: 19% 55-65: 17% > 66: 13%	18-34: 27% 35-44: 25% 45-54: 20% 55-65: 18% > 66: 10%
Economic activity	Student: 8% Retired: 20% Employee: 58% Unemployed: 10% Household work: 4%	Student: 6% Retired: 17% Employee: 58% Unemployed: 13% Household work: 6%	Student: 8% Retired: 22% Employee: 55% Unemployed: 11% Household work: 4%
Educational level	Primary studies: 37% Graduated studies: 42% Postgraduated: 21%	Primary studies: 29% Graduated studies: 65% Postgraduated: 6%	Primary studies: 34% Graduated studies: 51% Postgraduated: 15%
Monthly household income	< 1,499 €: 28% 1,500 € – 2,500 €: 25% 2,500 € - 4,999 €: 25% Prefer not to answer: 22%	< 1,499 €: 32% 1,500 € – 2,500 €: 24% 2,500 € - 4,999 €: 18% Prefer not to answer: 26%	< 1,499 €: 27% 1,500 € – 2,500 €: 29% 2,500 € - 4,999 €: 22% Prefer not to answer: 22%

Source: Own elaboration.

To collect the research data, we respected the Helsinki Declaration requirements, respondents were informed about the anonymity of their replies and that the aggregated information were used only for academic purpose.

The items of the online form submitted were created according to the literature review (Table 2). To measure purchase intention, 4 items were included based on Bui and Kemp (2013) and Kemp *et al.* (2021). To measure uncertainty and legitimacy, 3 and 7 items were included, respectively, based on Zhang *et al.* (2020) and Yang *et al.* (2021).

Table 2. Research items

Variable	Item	Question	Source
Purchase intention	BI1	I buy great quantity of products	Bui and Kemp, 2013; Kemp <i>et al.</i> , 2021
	BI2	I buy more than before	
	BI3	I buy more products to stock them	
	BI4	I spend more money on my shopping	
Uncertainty	Unct1	I feel that purchasing involves a high degree of uncertainty	Zhang <i>et al.</i> , 2020
	Unct2	I feel the uncertainty associated with purchasing is high	
	Unct3	There is a high degree of uncertainty when I make a purchase	
Legitimacy	Leg1	Trust is very important when I chose a product	Yang <i>et al.</i> , 2021
	Leg2	Company's ethics is important when I chose a product	
	Leg3	When I buy a product, I found important when a company fulfill my needs.	
	Leg4	When I chose a product, I mind if the company act responsibly	
	Leg5	I feel identified with the company's values	
	Leg6	I mind if the company is well managed	
	Leg7	It is important that the company respect the legal framework and laws	

Source: Own elaboration.

The methodology used for data analysis is structured in the following order: firstly, the reliability and validity of the scales is analysed using an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA); secondly, we validated the samples through an analysis of variance (Anova); and, thirdly, the hypotheses were contrasted through a regression analysis. The software used for the analysis of the results is SPSS version 21.

EFA is useful to identify and differentiate factors that can explain the observed covariation between a set of measured variables (Tucker and MacCallum, 1997; Watkins, 2018). In this way, EFA facilitates the interpretation of relationships based on the shared detected variability (Gie and Pearce, 2013; Gallardo-Vázquez *et al.*, 2023). Applied in this study, it helps to validate the measurement scales and analyse causality.

The application of ANOVA allowed us to analyse whether there were significant differences in the results of the three analysed groups about the relationships of purchase intention, uncertainty and legitimacy. ANOVA is used to compare the means of two or more groups determined by an independent variable and is an appropriate technique to analyse data from a factorial design (Field, 2013; Mazepus and Leeuwen, 2019; Gordo-Molina and Díez-Martín *et al.*, 2022). Once we determined that there were differences in the three groups,

we applied a simple linear regression with ordinary least squares to define the influence of uncertainty and legitimacy on purchase intention and validate the proposed hypotheses.

RESULTS

According to the results (Table 3), the mean values indicate that, on a seven-point scale, the intention to purchase products as a consequence of the pandemic is higher in the Long-Covid group than in the other two groups. The same occurs with the questions related to uncertainty, specifically, regarding the feeling of uncertainty, the average results indicate that consumers with Long-Covid have higher values followed by consumers who have not suffered from the disease. Finally, with respect to perceived legitimacy, the recorded values indicate that the perceptions are different depending on the group they belong to.

Table 3. Descriptive analysis

Variable	Item	Question	Long-Covid	Covid	No Covid
Purchase intention	BI1	I buy great quantity of products	2.71	2.06	2.04
	BI2	I buy more than before	2.64	2.13	2.12
	BI3	I buy more products to stock them	3.02	2.19	2.12
	BI4	I spend more money on my shopping	3.09	2.79	3.39
Uncertainty	Unct1	I feel that purchasing involves a high degree of uncertainty	4.80	3.98	4.32
	Unct2	I feel the uncertainty associated with purchasing is high	3.91	3.00	3.60
	Unct3	There is a high degree of uncertainty when I make a purchase	4.22	2.93	3.33
Legitimacy	Leg1	Trust is very important when I chose a product	5.23	5.16	5.25
	Leg2	Company's ethics is important when I chose a product	5.10	5.05	5.19
	Leg3	When I buy a product, I found important when a company fulfill my needs	5.35	5.78	5.89
	Leg4	When I chose a product, I mind if the company act responsibly	5.19	5.41	5.57
	Leg5	I feel identified with the company's values	4.04	4.36	4.37
	Leg6	I mind if the company is well managed	4.55	4.74	4.8
	Leg7	It is important that the company respect the legal framework and laws	5.14	5.66	5.48

Source: Own elaboration.

We proceeded to the hypotheses' validation in three phases. First, we carry out an Exploratory Factor Analysis to validate the measurement scales and to perform a causal analysis. As shown in Table 4, the results of the factorial analysis indicate that the scales are adequate, the loads are greater than 0.60 in all items, Cronbach's Alpha greater than 0.7, and the variance greater than 60%.

Table 4. Exploratory Factor Analysis

Variable	Item	Beta	Cronbach Alpha	Explained variance
Purchase intention	BI1	0.790	0.815	65.821%
	BI2	0.754		
	BI3	0.842		
	BI4	0.557		
Uncertainty	Unct1	0.909	0.949	90.714%
	Unct2	0.985		
	Unct3	0.890		
Legitimacy	Leg1	0.772	0.896	62.578%
	Leg2	0.841		
	Leg3	0.672		
	Leg4	0.860		
	Leg5	0.602		
	Leg6	0.700		
	Leg7	0.787		

Source: Own elaboration.

Second, we analyze whether there are significant differences in the results of the three analyzed groups. Table 5 contains the data from the analysis of variance (Anova) which confirms that there are significant differences between groups for all the analyzed variables. These results indicate that it is necessary to carry out an individual regression analysis for each group and determine which factors affect their purchase intention.

Table 5. Analysis of variance

Variable	Sum of squares	gl	Quadratic mean	F	Sig.
Purchase intention	16.787	2	83.93	10.19	<0.001
Uncertainty	19.076	2	9.53	10.84	<0.001
Legitimacy	9.154	2	4.57	5.08	0.007

Source: Own elaboration.

Third, the cause-effect relationship between the purchase intention and each of its antecedents is analysed, depending on the type of exposure to Covid-19 (Table 6). Regarding Long-Covid consumers, the regression of 42.5% confirms that their purchase intention is influenced by the perception of uncertainty (0.329) and legitimacy (-0.144). Regarding those people who overcame Covid-19 without sequelae, the regression is of 20.7%, and uncertainty is the determinant variable of intention (0.232). Finally, for people who have not fallen ill with Covid-19, the regression of 34.2% of the purchase intention, and uncertainty is the determining factor.

Table 6. Regression analysis

Group	Variable	Beta	T-value
Long-Covid	Uncertainty	0.329	4.392
	Legitimacy	-0.124	2.652
Covid	Uncertainty	0.232	2.599
	Legitimacy	0.071	0.792
No Covid	Uncertainty	0.375	5.655
	Legitimacy	0.010	0.990

R2: Long-Covid = 0.425; Covid = 0.207; No Covid = 0.342

Source: Own elaboration.

DISCUSSION

The objective of this paper is to fulfil a gap in the recently identified research agenda about the need to deeply analyse and understand how severe crisis may affect consumers behaviours according with their emotions, fear and risk (Gupta *et al.*, 2023). Specifically, we meant to contribute to the academic research, but also adding value through managerial implications and practical significance (Billore and Anisimova, 2021).

Covid-19 pandemic caused great changes in consumers behaviours, especially during the first few months. In line with previous research, Covid-19 pandemic has caused changes in consumer behaviour that have a different impact depending on the kind of relationship with the virus itself (people affected by Long-Covid, people that had Covid and people that were not infected by Covid) (Cruz-Cárdenas *et al.*, 2021; Payne *et al.*, 2021). Previous studies have shown how health epidemics influence the purchasing behaviour of those who have suffered from the outbreak (direct influence), and the behaviour of people who have not suffered from it (indirect influence) due to fear of contracting the disease (Galoni *et al.*, 2022). The impact of the consequences generated by the virus also affected the consumer purchase intention. For example, during severe crisis consumers tend to stock up some products categories or reduce other due to the increased risk perception (Billore and Anisimova, 2021; Cachón-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2021b; Diogo and Veiga, 2022).

In this line, the results of the study show that uncertainty is perceived differently depending on the group's experience. Although all groups, based on their experience with the virus, perceive a high level of uncertainty and this context affects their purchase intention, the impact of the risk perception is greater for those who have not suffered from the disease. The reason is that this group of people do not know how the disease could affect them and this uncertainty generates highly influences their purchasing behaviour (0.375). However, those who have overcome Covid-19 without sequelae show a lower impact of uncertainty (0.232) possibly because they have recovered from the disease, and they are not afraid to get sick again. Finally, people affected by Long-Covid show the same grade of uncertainty and the same impact on the purchase intention (0.329) with values similar to those who have not suffered from the disease. As first theoretical contribution of the research, the results confirm the theory that shows that in a crisis context, emotions such fear, risk perception and uncertainty highly affect people purchase behaviour and intention (Gupta *et al.*, 2023; Moldes *et al.*, 2022)

Findings also show that a higher level of fear and risk perception, negatively influence buying habits. Therefore, as a second contribution to academic theories, the research confirms that a positive management of information is very important for people emotions control (Moldes *et al.*, 2022). Policy makers and media should provide prompt and correct information, without creating panic and overwhelm consumers, in order to avoid panic buying behaviour and an increase of materialism. Providing correct information decreases the grade of uncertainty, subjectivity, and misinformation. Also brands and firm are responsible of carefully communicating data and information. They should help public administrations in sharing evidence to help people to cope with fear and uncertainty.

Thirdly, as we pointed out in the theoretical framework, during crisis and uncertainty, consumer judgments and perceptions tend to change (Ashforth and Mael, 1996; Thomas and Lamm, 2012; Blanco-González *et al.*, 2020), so the social acceptance of companies and the organizational legitimacy become key assets for strategic management (Blanco-González *et al.*, 2023). How consumers evaluate companies' performance and engage with them is also determined by the context (Payne *et al.*, 2021) and the management of uncertainty (Cachón-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2021b). People perceptions are affected by the environment, and brands trust is more important than ever (Wandoko and Panggati, 2022).

In general, consumers are willing to associate with legitimate organizations and avoid maintaining relationships with those that are questioned by the social system (Deephouse *et al.*, 2017; Miotto and Youn, 2020; Díez-Martín *et al.*, 2022). Consumers trust more legitimate firms, so, during severe crisis, these companies have a strong competitive advantage. According to the result, risk perception is determinant in consumer behaviour, therefore companies that are able to mitigate risk, improve trust and be legitimate, will become the best choice for the consumers. Companies have to manage their legitimacy since it this will act as the counterweight that will compensate the decrease in purchase intention derived from the impact of uncertainty. The results show that the impact of

legitimacy is different depending on the group and that legitimacy affects the purchase intention specifically on Long-Covid consumers (-0.124), the once that are more touched by Covid consequences. Companies should be very sensitive and accurate in order to create specific communication strategies and policies in order to stand by this group of people that, unfortunately, is still numerous.

In terms of managerial implications, this study is especially relevant because it highlights that a pandemic has long term effects. According to the World Health Organization (2022), Long-Covid is characterized by the persistence of Covid-19 symptoms weeks or months after the initial infection (respiratory problems, pain headache, vomiting, extreme exhaustion, etc.). Sometimes, the long-term symptoms are not related to the severity of the initial infection, so it can affect both mild and severe hospitalized patients. In addition, it affects people of any age and has a high impact on quality of life. Companies and governments must consider the existence of this group of people and adapt their strategies to fulfil their needs and expectations.

The research has several limits, specifically related to the narrow geographical scope, since the survey data were collected just in Spain. We took into consideration the purchase intention, but in future we may include more variables such as brand perception and reputation and comparing different countries depending on their Covid-19 impact. Future research should take into consideration a multinational comparison and a follow up of the study in few years in order to understand the evolution of the Covid-19 effect in consumer behaviours in a long-term perspective.

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