

# Analysis of consumers purchase intention in commerce and services in the neighborhood and the Impact of Covid-19

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## Abstract

**Paper aims:** To analyze the consumers intention to buy in commerce and services in the neighborhood, using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as a theoretical basis, analyzing the Attitude, the Subjective Norm, the Perceived Behavioral Control, and expanding the TPB through the influence on the Attitude of the Moral Attitude, Empathic Concern and the Impact of Covid-19.

**Originality:** There are no studies on consumer buying behavior in commerce and neighborhood services in emerging countries, nor with this combination in the conceptual structure - TBP, Empathic Concern, Moral Attitude and the Impact of Covid-19.

**Research method:** Data were collected from respondents, and analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

**Main findings:** The results indicate that the consumer's attitude towards buying in the neighborhood's commerce and services was positively and significantly influenced by the Moral Attitude and Impact of Covid-19 but not by Empathic Concern. Attitude, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behavioral Control positively and significantly influence the intention to buy in neighborhood commerce and services.

**Implications for theory and practice:** As a theoretical implication, the conceptual model extends the TBP, adding the dimensions of Empathic Concern, Moral Attitude, and the Impact of Covid-19 on Attitude. In practice, the study can help store managers, retailers, and marketing professionals in the sector incorporate specific actions to reach potential consumers and improve their results.

## Keywords

Theory of planned behavior. Buy intention. Covid-19. Neighborhood economy. Local service.

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## 1. Introduction

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been used for decades to understand different phenomena related to consumer behavior. The TPB was developed by Ajzen (1991) and states that an individual's behavior can be predicted from his intention; the stronger his intention to engage in a given behavior, the more likely his



performance should be. In this context, behavior can be determined by three factors: attitude (ATT), subjective norm (NS), and perceived behavioral control (PBC) by the individual (Ajzen, 1991).

Recently, the impact on purchase intention of TPB variables on consumption in an emerging economy was identified by Khan et al. (2023). The influence of the Attitude (Palau-Saumell et al., 2021), of the Subjective Norm (Nekmahmud et al., 2022) and of the Perceived Behavioral Control (Loera et al., 2022) showed to be positive in the decision purchasing and consumption of products.

Moral Attitude (MA) is verified when an individual is aware that his actions can influence the well-being of others (Olsen et al., 2010). About this factor, Arvola et al. (2008) suggest that there are reasons to believe that moral considerations influence purchase decisions and that Empathic Concern (EC) involves a human motivation beyond self-interest, considered essential in exchange relationships, and may influence consumer choices (Lee, 2016). However, sudden changes in social dynamics can alter human motivation and behavior.

Olsen et al. (2010), Qi & Ploeger (2021), Loera et al. (2022) include Moral Attitude (MA) influencing Intention (INT) and Rapert et al. (2021) also analyzes empathic concern (EC) influencing purchase intention (INT). Qi & Ploeger (2021) verified the Impact of Covid-19 (IOC) on the green food purchase intentions (INT). This research analyzes Moral Attitude (MA), Empathic Concern (EC) and Impact of Covid-19 (IOC) influencing Attitude (ATT).

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected billions of people, leading to a significant global economic and social crisis (Kabadayi et al., 2020). Social distancing was the most common guideline given by experts to reduce the virus transmission (Tuzovic & Kabadayi, 2018). Research regarding the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on consumption and consumer behavior has also shown several changes in behavior. Some examples were the decrease in consumer preference for mass products compared to niche products (Alexa et al., 2021), changes in individuals' consumption practices related to food purchases (Amin et al., 2021), and increased shopping in small local stores and online shopping (Li et al., 2020), inducing significant changes in fresh vegetable buying behavior (Butu et al., 2020).

In Brazil, Social isolation was also one of the main measures adopted, closing non-essential commerce and services (Lessa et al., 2023). For Sayyida et al. (2021), the proportion of sales in physical stores before the pandemic was greater than 94% of total retail sales in Latin America, which would make it difficult for consumers not to make purchases in physical stores and seek out commerce and services in the neighborhood. Brazilian entrepreneurs, especially low-income neighborhoods entrepreneurs (including neighborhood commerce and services), had limited access to other sources of income, increasing the importance of the survival of their enterprises (Brito et al., 2022), although financial aid mitigated the impacts of the pandemic (Tupy et al., 2023).

Studies on consumer intention in Brazil related to the Covid-19 pandemic involved aspects such as: consumers' intention to visit restaurants during the pandemic, which were affected by risk perception and different types of consumer trust (Hakim et al., 2021); the use of food delivery apps during the Covid-19 pandemic, including risk perception and solidarity (Zanetta et al., 2021); the determinants of consumer behavioral intention to use restaurants, shows and online education services during and after the Covid-19 pandemic (Silva et al., 2022); the intention to cook at home and buy food outside the home after the Covid-19 lockdown (Carvalho et al., 2022); retail sales levels before, during and after the panic buying period (Brito Junior et al., 2023); and changes in feelings of fear about Covid-19 and consumer relations (Merlo et al., 2023). Thus, there is a gap to be studied regarding purchase intentions in neighborhood commerce and services and the Impact of Covid-19 in an emerging country such as Brazil.

For the purposes of this article, we adopt Teitz's definition of a neighborhood as "a contiguous subarea within a city or region that its inhabitants and others see as possessing internal coherence and social meaning". Economically, a neighborhood is also a locus of production for the market. In that sense, a neighborhood has one of its main aspects the production of goods and services for consumption by neighborhood residents, which we can define as a "neighborhood economy" (Teitz, 1989).

To contribute to the knowledge of the area, this work seeks to identify and evaluate the buying behavior of Brazilian consumers in a neighborhood economy. Moreover, this work proposes a behavioral model to help policymakers, small business managers, and researchers establish marketing strategies for neighborhood businesses.

The article aims to analyze consumers intention to purchase in commerce and services in the neighborhood, using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as a theoretical basis, analyzing Attitude, Subjective Norm, Perceived Behavioral Control, and expanding the TPB through the influence on the Attitude of the Moral Attitude, Empathic Concern, and the Impact of Covid-19.

To check if behavioral intention positively influences the purchase intention and continuity of purchase in the commerce and services of the neighborhood, the study examined and developed a conceptual model extending the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) through the addition of three dimensions to the model - Empathic Concern, Moral Attitude and the Impact of Covid-19 - on Attitude, and surveyed by applying a questionnaire

to consumers who have the habit of shopping in neighborhood commerce and services. To the best of our knowledge, this study, with an innovative combination in the conceptual structure.

The remainder of the article is structured below, with Section 2 presenting the conceptual framework and hypothesis development. Next, the methodology is presented in Section 3, followed by Section 4 with the results, Section 5 with the discussions, and sections 6 and 7 with the conclusions, limitations, and future research agenda.

## 2. Conceptual structure

### 2.1. The Theory of Planned Behavior

As previously stated, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was developed by Ajzen (1991) and proposes that the stronger the intention to engage in a given behavior, the more likely its performance should be. This behavior is determined by three factors: attitude, subjective norm, and behavioral control perceived by the individual (Ajzen, 1991). Khan et al. (2023) identified a significant impact on purchase intention when they tested the direct effect of TPB variables in the context of consumption in an emerging economy.

The individual's attitude refers to the assessment, positive or negative, favorable or unfavorable that an individual verifies regarding a particular phenomenon, action, or behavior in question (Ajzen, 1991). In this context, Rahimah et al. (2018) inserted the psychological tendency of consumers toward purchasing with certain degrees of favor or disfavor. Furthermore, Sadiq et al. (2021) identified antecedents that a positive attitude develops behavioral intentions for actual use and noted that attitude is positively associated with behavioral intentions. Palau-Saumell et al. (2021) reported that the positive influence of attitude on intentions is widely supported, understanding that the more positive is an attitude towards consumption, the greater the probability of purchase.

The subjective norm is related to the influences and social pressure the individual perceives to engage in or perform a specific behavior, alluding to their perceptions regarding the opinions and views of people in their reference groups - such as family, friends, peers, and community (Ajzen, 1991; Al-Swidi et al., 2014). For example, Bianchi & Mortimer (2015) analyzed the impact of subjective norms on consumer purchase intentions, and the results showed an insignificant relationship that would affect consumers' purchase intentions. Nekmahmud et al. (2022) demonstrated that individuals are inclined to purchase products if they perceive that their friends, family, or peer groups expect them to adopt these behaviors and value their approval in the buying process. This is because positive opinions about the products can influence purchase intentions..

Perceived Behavioral Control concerns the difficulty or easiness perceived by the individual to perform a behavior, that is, the ability of an individual to control his behavior independently (Ajzen, 1991). Likewise, Dean et al. (2012) analyzed perceived behavioral control using difficulty, availability, and control items and showed an independent predictive effect for a given product but not another. The authors believe this may result from participants' uncertainty about the availability of the second product (Dean et al., 2012). Loera et al. (2022) found that the perception of control over the decision to buy and consume products increases purchase intentions. They demonstrated that Perceived Behavioral Control is one of the four main factors responsible for influencing purchasing behavior

Considering what is stated by the TPB - the more favorable the attitude and the subjective norm and the greater the perceived behavioral control, the stronger the individual's intention to perform a specific behavior (Ajzen, 1991) - the present study presents the following hypotheses from TPB:

H1 - Attitude (ATT) positively influences the intention to buy in neighborhood commerce and services.

H2 - The Subjective Norm (SN) positively influences the intention to buy in the neighborhood's commerce and services.

H3 - Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) positively influences the intention to buy in the neighborhood's commerce and services.

### 2.2. Moral attitude

The TPB model has been criticized for failing to include moral or ethical concerns and neglecting moral influences on behavior (Arvola et al., 2008; Kaiser, 2006; Shaw et al., 2000). According to Olsen et al. (2010), the moral attitude arises when an individual is aware of their actions, which can influence the well-being of others, feeling a sense of responsibility for his action and their consequences.

Accordingly, Qi & Ploeger (2021) identified antecedents (Dowd & Burke, 2013; Yazdanpanah & Forouzani, 2015) that added moral norms to the original TPB model and verified the occurrence of significant increases

in the model's fidelity and explanatory capacity. For Dowd & Burke (2013), while the moral norm focuses on negative feelings invoked when personal moral values are violated, the positive moral attitude focuses on the possible positive consequences of fulfilling one's moral values. The study indicated significant effects of positive moral attitude in predicting purchase intention, presenting a profound effect added to the explanatory power of TPB (Dowd & Burke, 2013).

Arvola et al. (2008) had the understanding that there are reasons to believe that moral considerations influence purchase decisions. In their study (Arvola et al., 2008), researchers integrated measures of affective and moral attitudes into the TPB model to predict organic food purchase intentions motivated by positive consequences for the individual and others. They found that the measure of positive moral attitude increases the share of explained variance in attitudes and intentions, suggesting that it seems to be helpful to use this measure to understand and predict purchase intentions (Arvola et al., 2008).

Boazar et al. (2019) argued that positive emotions affect attitudes and demonstrate that engaging in responsible behavior is beneficial, potentially leading to positive outcomes. Similarly, Loera et al. (2022) suggested that a positive Moral Attitude could serve as a catalyst for purchase intentions, as it represents both gratification and motivation to contribute. As the positive moral attitude considers measuring the favorable self-evaluations that may arise when there is an anticipated alignment with one's own moral principles (Schwartz, 1977 apud Arvola et al., 2008), and that moral norms evaluation in purchase intentions in a neighborhood economy were not applied in previous studies, the following hypothesis was established:

H4 - The Moral Attitude (MA) positively influences the buying attitude in the neighborhood's trade and services.

### 2.3. Empathetic concern

Empathy is sensitivity and understanding toward others (Rapert et al., 2021). Empathy is also part of the feelings related to human motivations other than self-interest, as moral and emotional motivators can influence altruistic consumer choices (Lee, 2016). For Lee (2016), empathy is essential in exchange relationships. He concludes that empathy replaces the nature of the relationship from opportunism to altruism, understanding that a relationship based on empathy, once established, is difficult to dissolve (Lee, 2016).

Verhaert & Van den Poel (2011) identified a stream of research that defines empathy as a personality trait. This line of research investigated how individual differences in empathy affect helping behavior. The interpersonal reactivity index was used to measure empathy (Davis, 1983 apud Verhaert & Van den Poel, 2011). In this context, they evaluated how individual differences in empathy, according to the interpersonal reactivity index, affect giving behavior. The results demonstrated that as empathic concern increases, the propensity to donate also increases. They concluded that people with empathic concern decide to help reduce other people's stress, altruistic motivation is directed toward the goal of increasing the well-being of others, and considerable evidence shows that heightened feelings of empathic concern lead people to help others (Verhaert & Van den Poel, 2011).

Papagiannidis et al. (2023) discovered that confinement restrictions led to an increase in consumer altruism, particularly in terms of helping others gain access to products and reducing the perception of social exclusion. Empathic concern plays a significant and positive role in purchase intentions and interpersonal generosity, and the more socially empathetic the consumer is, the more generous he tends to be. Processes that facilitate a prosocial response and help understand how consumers prepare to act according to generous purchase intentions (Rapert et al., 2021).

Considering what was observed regarding empathic concern, the present study proposed the following hypothesis:

H5 - Empathic Concern (EC) positively influences the attitude to buying in the neighborhood's trade and services.

### 2.4. Impact of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a major global economic crisis (Kabadayi et al., 2020) and represents one of the most significant challenges facing businesses and governments in the past 100 years (Hall et al., 2020).

Among the various guidelines given by experts and doctors to reduce the transmission of the virus that causes the disease, social distancing was the most commonly offered (Tuzovic & Kabadayi, 2018; Shakeel et al., 2023), and research on the immediate effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on consumption and consumption consumer behavior show various changes in the behavior of individuals.

Some studies show, for example, a decrease in consumer preference for mass products compared to niche products or an increase in the variety of foods consumed (Alexa et al., 2021) and changes in the consumption practices of individuals related to purchases of food (Amin et al., 2021).

A study by Li et al. (2020), who adopted TPB to empirically analyze changes in consumer behavior in the early stages of the Covid-19 outbreak in China, showed an increase in shopping in small local stores and online shopping. Research by Qi and Ploeger (2021), considering that the Covid-19 outbreak influenced consumer habits and behaviors and created an era of more sustainable and healthier consumption, found that health awareness and the Impact of Covid-19 have significant positive effects on green food purchase intentions.

Benker (2021 apud Lehberger et al., 2021) informed that there was a change in meal planning and the types of food purchased in the United Kingdom. Moreover, Germany presented a 126% increase in demand for canned fruit and 137% in demand for canned vegetables (Benker, 2021 apud Lehberger et al., 2021). On the influence of Covid-19 on consumer behavior, a study by Brumă et al. (2021) sought to observe consumer behavior in relation to dairy products delivered directly by producers. The researchers found a change in future purchase behavior in short food supply chains. Butu et al. (2020) analyzed consumer buying behavior for fresh vegetables directly from local producers. They confirmed the hypothesis that the Covid-19 pandemic induced significant changes in consumer buying behavior for this type of product.

The investigation for the development of the present study pointed out a lack of research on the Impact of Covid-19 on consumer behavior regarding their intention to buy in a neighborhood economy, which motivated a proposal for Hypothesis 6:

**H6** - The Impact of Covid-19 (IOC) positively influences the attitude toward buying trade and services in the neighborhood.

### 2.5. Theoric model

The present study developed and proposed a research model adopting TPB. The model is based on adding three constructs: Moral Attitude, Empathic Concern, and the Impact of Covid-19 influencing attitude. Adding such constructs aims to explain and predict purchase intentions in a neighborhood economy. The conceptual model proposed for the research is presented in Figure 1 and demonstrates the purchase intention in the neighborhood's commerce and services (INT) being influenced by the attitude (ATT), by the subjective norm (SN), and by the perceived behavioral control (PBC). The model also demonstrates that attitude (ATT) is directly influenced by moral attitude (MA), empathic concern (EC), and the Impact of Covid-19 (IOC).

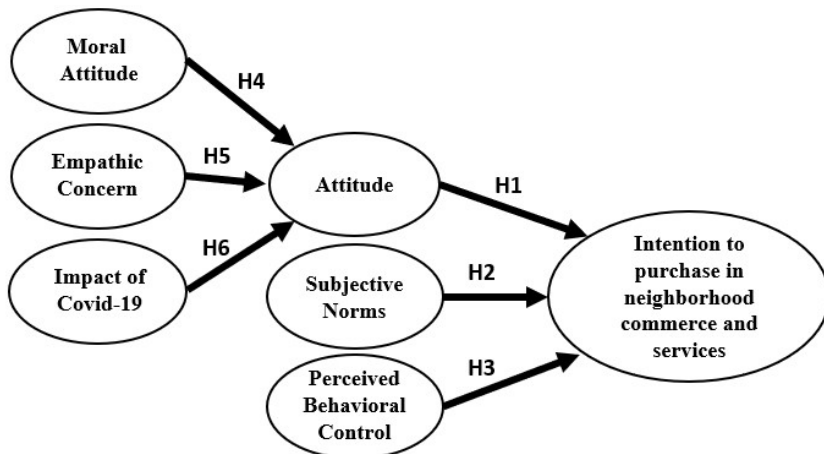


Figure 1. Conceptual structure of research.

The model uses the formative variables ATT, SN and PBC determinants of the latent variable INT, as explained Cadogan & Lee (2013). MA, EC, and IOC are also formative variables, but of the variable ATT with the intent of increasing the predictive power of the model. Formative variables directly and indirectly affect the endogenous variables that composing the development of purchase intention (Loera et al., 2022).

### 3. Method

For the development of this study, a questionnaire was designed and used to collect empirical data and test the proposed hypotheses.

The questionnaire consisted of 51 questions and was divided into three parts. The first part presented two questions, one about the agreement to participate in the research and the other about the habit of buying in the neighborhood trade and services. The second part contained statements referring to attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, behavioral intention, empathic concern, moral attitude, and Impact of Covid-19). We used 27 items adapted from previous studies in the literature to measure the conceptual model. These 27 items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale, with labels ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). The third part, with 11 questions, covered general sociodemographic data.

An online platform is a valuable tool for researchers, allowing data collection from many individuals in a short period (Newman et al., 2021). Thus, a questionnaire was designed, and data was collected using an online survey platform (Google Forms).

After conducting a brief pilot study involving 21 consumers, the initial questionnaire was adjusted to improve understanding. The link to the online questionnaire was distributed via social media, specifically WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Email. The survey was administered between October 25 and November 15, 2021.

The target group for this survey included consumers who were in the habit of shopping in commerce and services in their neighborhood, with the participant being informed that the term “neighborhood commerce and services” referred to small commerce and service stores, such as supermarkets, butchers, bakeries, greengrocers, pharmacies, clothing shops etc. located close to your residence and asked at the beginning of the online survey, “How often do you buy to commerce and services in your neighborhood?” and used for filtering. The survey would only continue if the requirement “habit of shopping in commerce and services in your neighborhood” were met. In all, 267 respondents accessed the link and responded to the survey. After removing incomplete questionnaires, the sample had 257 valid responses (i.e., a response rate of 96%) for the final analysis of the data.

### 4. Results

Of the 257 respondents, 36.2% identified themselves as male, and 63.4% identified as female. Regarding marital status, 60.3% of the sample were married, 28.6% were single, 8.6% were divorced and 2.3% were widowed.

Most respondents, corresponding to 50.8% of them, are aged between 40 and 49 years old, followed by 35.9% between 18 and 39 years old and 13.3% aged between 60 and 81 years old. From the pool, 84% of the participants said they were white, 9.4% brown, 3.9% black, 2.3% yellow and 0.4% indigenous.

Concerning education, 50.8% of the participants have postgraduate degrees, followed by complete higher education with 32.1%, incomplete higher education, and incomplete postgraduate studies with 7.42% and 5.9 of the respondents. As for the average family income, 40.1% of the participants reported income above 2 to 6 minimum wages (R\$ 2,201.00 to 6,600.00), 32.3% answered to be above 6 to 10 minimum wages ( R\$6,601 to 11,000.00), 24.6% of the respondents claimed to earn more than 10 minimum wages (R\$11,000.00) and only 3% claimed to earn up to 2 minimum wages (R\$2,200.00).

Regarding the frequency with which the survey participants shop in the neighborhood's trade and services, 39.4% of respondents said they shop twice or more a week, 25.4% shop only once a week, and 18% shop daily.

Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze the data and model proposed by the study. The method can simultaneously measure a series of dependent variables, causal models, or equations Chin, 1998). The SmartPLS 2.0 M3 software (Hair et al., 2017) was used to measure the confirmatory factor analysis and the structural relationships between the variables presented in the model.

We calculated the minimum sample size requirements following the indication of Hair et al. (2011a), which indicates that it is ten times the number of indicators of the construct with the highest number of indicators. The model presents the Empathic Concern construct with 6 indicators, so a sample of 60 respondents would be enough to test the model, and the sample size is 257 participants.

#### 4.1. Conceptual model evaluation

For validation of the proposed model shown in Figure 1, reliability indexes and Cronbach's alpha coefficient values were analyzed, and convergent and discriminant validity was explored for the construct used in the study using the SmartPLS 2.0 M3 software. The composite reliability index recommended by Hair et al. (2011b) is that



it should not be less than 0.70 and also suggests that the minimum value required for Cronbach's alpha is 0.70, which may represent the model's internal consistency. Hair et al. (2019) complements this by stating that CR values greater than 0.95 are problematic and may represent redundant indicators. The average variance extracted (AVE) of the constructs was calculated by checking two subcomponents of construct validity: convergent and discriminant validity. To support convergent validity, the AVE values of each construct must be greater than 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). To support discriminant validity, the AVE construct values must be greater than the highest quadratic correlation high with any other latent variable.

All criteria (Cronbach's alpha and AVE) were met for all six constructs, validating the initially proposed structural model, and the assessment of construct validity is reported in Table 1.

**Table 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Result (Software SmartPLS2.0).**

Construct	Item	Adapted from:	Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach $\alpha$
Attitude (ATT)	I like the idea of buying from commerce and/or services in my neighborhood.	Rahimah et al. (2018)	0.8887	0.7933	0.9201	0.8697
	I have a favorable attitude towards buying in my neighborhood's commerce and/or services.		0.9114			
	Buying in my neighborhood's commerce and/or services is a good idea.		0.8714			
Subjective Norm (SN)	My family thinks I should buy at my neighborhood's commerce and/or services.	Bianchi & Mortimer (2015)	0.8689	0.7775	0.9332	0.9047
	People who influence my consumer behavior think I should shop at the commerce and/or services in my neighborhood.		0.8908			
	My friends think I should buy at my neighborhood's commerce and/or services.		0.8829			
	People who are important to me think I should buy at my neighborhood's commerce and/or services.		0.8844			
Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)	For me, buying in my neighborhood's commerce and/or services instead of other locations is easy.	Dean et al. (2012)	0.7850	0.6943	0.8718	0.7796
	Products and services I need are available in my neighborhood's commerce and/or services.		0.8510			
	If I wanted to, it would be possible to buy in my neighborhood's commerce and/or services instead of other locations.		0.8617			
Moral Attitude (MA)	To buy in the commerce and/or services of my neighborhood instead of other locations would be to make a personal contribution to something better.	Arvola et al. (2008)	0.8788	0.7903	0.9187	0.8686
	Buying in my neighborhood's commerce and/or services instead of other locations would seem morally right.		0.8983			
	Buying in my neighborhood's commerce and/or services instead of other locations would make me feel like a better person.		0.8899			
Empathetic Concern (EC)	When I see my neighborhood's commerce and/or services being exploited, I feel kind of protective of them.	Rapert et al. (2021)	0.8278	0.7013	0.9336	0.9150
	The adversities suffered by my neighborhood's commerce and/or services usually disturb me a lot.		0.8456			
	When I see my neighborhood's commerce and/or services being treated unfairly, I usually feel sorry.		0.8013			
	I am often concerned about my less favored neighborhood's commerce and/or services.		0.8017			
	I often feel sorry for the commerce and services of the neighborhood when they are having trouble.		0.8674			
Impact of Covid-19 (IOC)	I often feel sensitive to what I see happening to my neighborhood's commerce and/or services.	Qi & Ploeger (2021)	0.8776	0.7614	0.9053	0.8430
	I realize that the Covid-19 pandemic has personally influenced me to shop at the commerce and/or services in my neighborhood.		0.8427			
	I realize that the Covid-19 pandemic has changed my consumption pattern in my neighborhood's commerce and services.		0.9178			
	I realize that the Covid-19 pandemic will change society regarding shopping in the neighborhood commerce and/or services.		0.8555			
Buying Intention (INT)	I am willing to buy in my neighborhood's commerce and/or services if it is available.	Sadiq et al. (2021)	0.8781	0.7725	0.9314	0.9017
	I plan to shop at the commerce and/or services in my neighborhood on a regular basis.		0.9137			
	I plan to buy at the commerce and/or services in my neighborhood in the future.		0.8643			
	I plan to buy at the commerce and/or services in my neighborhood in the future.		0.8586			

## 4.2. Structural model evaluation and hypothesis testing

Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in the Smart PLS2.0 M3 was used to test the proposed model and the presented hypotheses describing the causal relationships. The values of R2, which indicate predictive power in the sample, were verified, and the results for Attitude (ATT) and intention (INT) were 0.222 and 0.555, respectively, confirming that the estimates fit the data. Cohen et al. (2018) considers R2 values of 0.02 to be low, 0.13 to be considered medium, and 0.26 to be high. Therefore, the R2 values of Attitude (AT) and Intention (INT) are satisfactory.

The results indicate that for H1, the consumer's attitude towards shopping in the neighborhood's trade and services is positively and significantly related to purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.598$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), and the hypothesis is accepted. The result of H2 ( $\beta = 0.131$ ,  $p = 0.025$ ) indicates that the Subjective Norm (SN) is positively and significantly related to the intention to buy in trade and services in the neighborhood.

The result of Hypothesis 3 indicates that Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) is also significantly and positively related to the intention to buy in trade and services in the neighborhood ( $\beta = 0.138$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ). The result of H4 ( $\beta = 0.287$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) shows a positive and significant relationship between Moral Attitude (MA) and the attitude toward buying in the neighborhood's commerce and services. Thus, H1, H2, H3 and H4 are accepted.

For H5, the results do not show that empathetic concern (EC) is positively related to shopping in neighborhood shops and services ( $\beta = 0.070$ ,  $p = 0.383$ ). Therefore, H5 is rejected. And the results of the last one, H6 ( $\beta = 0.187$ ,  $p = 0.030$ ), demonstrate that the Impact of Covid-19 (IOC) had a positive and significant relationship with purchases in neighborhood trade and services, and therefore H6 is also accepted. The results of the hypothesis tests are shown in Tables 2 and 3. The structural model tested is shown in Figure 2.

Test results and interpretation of the hypotheses are explained throughout the Discussion section.

Table 2. Results of the structural equation model (Software SmartPLS).

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	Standard Error (STERR)	T Statistics ( O/STERR )	P Value
ATT -> INT	0.5981	0.5973	0.0597	0.0597	10.0265	0.0000*
SN -> INT	0.1315	0.1309	0.0431	0.0431	3.0518	0.0025*
PBC -> INT	0.1376	0.1399	0.0541	0.0541	2.5417	0.0116*
MA -> AT	0.2874	0.2887	0.0688	0.0688	4.1745	0.0000*
EC -> AT	0.0702	0.0743	0.0803	0.0803	0.8736	0.3832**
IOC -> AT	0.1875	0.1878	0.0862	0.0862	2.1749	0.0305*

Note: \* $p < 0.05$  - significant difference; \*\* $p > 0.05$  - non significant difference.

Table 3. Hypotheses and results summary.

Hypothesis	Result
H1 - The Attitude (ATT) positively influences the intention to buy in the commerce and services of the neighborhood.	ACCEPT
H2 - The Subjective Norm (SN) positively influences the intention to buy in the commerce and services of the neighborhood.	ACCEPT
H3 - Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) has a positive influence on the intention to buy in the commerce and services of the neighborhood.	ACCEPT
H4 - The Moral Attitude (MA) positively influences the attitude of buying in the commerce and services of the neighborhood.	ACCEPT
H5 - Empathic Concern (EC) positively influences the attitude of buying in the commerce and services of the neighborhood.	REJECT
H6 - The Impact of Covid-19 (IOC) positively influences the intention to buy in the commerce and services of the neighborhood.	ACCEPT



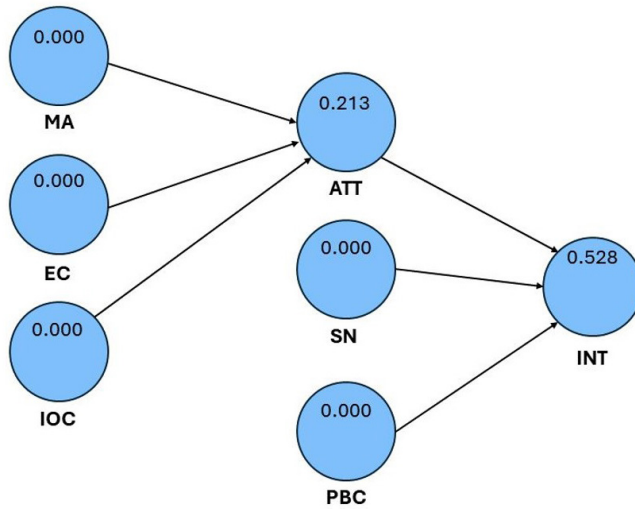


Figure 2. Structural model tested.

## 5. Discussion

Consumer habits and behaviors are changing (Butu et al., 2020; Brumă et al., 2021; Qi & Ploeger, 2021), and empirical evidence shows an increase in purchases in small local stores (Li et al., 2020). Using and extending the TPB, our study presents empirical evidence that the consumer’s attitude towards shopping in the neighborhood’s trade and services was positively and significantly influenced by the Moral Attitude and Impact of Covid-19 but was not positively and significantly influenced by the Concern Empathetic.

The influence of Moral Attitude on Attitude agrees with the findings of Arvola et al. (2008). This influence can predict purchase intentions in commerce and neighborhood services due to positive consequences for the individual and others, increasing the portion of explained variance ( $R^2$ ) in attitude, showing that the measure seems to be helpful in predicting intentions in this purchase study. Boazar et al. (2019) argue that personal beliefs about right or wrong and their consequences reflect Moral Attitudes, suggesting that positive emotions associated with these attitudes can influence responsible consumer behavior. Similarly, Qi & Ploeger (2021) found that a positive moral attitude enhances purchase intentions in local commerce and services.

The Impact of Covid-19 positively and significantly influenced Attitude, which aligns with what Qi and Ploeger verified (2021). This construct also increases the portion of explained variance ( $R^2$ ) in Attitude. The results indicate that COVID-19 impacted purchase intentions in local commerce and services during the pandemic. These findings demonstrate a change in consumption patterns, consistent with the studies of Alexa et al. (2021), Amin et al. (2021), Li et al. (2020), and Butu et al. (2020).

Unlike Rapert et al. (2021), the findings in the present study reject that Empathic Concern positively and significantly influences Attitude. The findings also diverge from those of Papagiannidis et al. (2023), suggesting that there was no increase in altruism. This could imply that consumers might be less willing to make purchases in local commerce and services out of concern for others.

Attitude, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behavioral Control positively and significantly influenced the intention to buy in commerce and services in the neighborhood. As in Rahimah et al. (2018), and Sadiq et al. (2021), the positive and significant influence of Attitude toward Purchase Intention in commerce and neighborhood services shows the favorable or unfavorable psychological tendency of consumers. It is suggested that consumers have a positive attitude towards the intention to buy in neighborhood shops and services, as stated by Ajzen (1991) and Palau-Saumell et al. (2021).

The influences and social pressure perceived by the individual through the Subjective Norm on Purchase Intention in neighborhood trade and services are positive and significant but differ from the results of Bianchi & Mortimer (2015), who showed an insignificant relationship that would affect purchase intentions. According to Al-Swidi et al. (2014), subjective norms play a relevant role in the formation of purchase intentions in neighborhood commerce and services. Moreover, Nekmahmud et al. (2022) pointed out that if consumers realize that their friends, family or peers want them to buy from neighborhood commerce and services, this could have a positive influence on purchase intention.

Regarding the difficulty, availability, and control perceived by the individual to perform the behavior, the Perceived Behavioral Control had a positive and significant influence on the Purchase Intention in commerce and neighborhood services and corroborated the results of Dean et al. (2012) to show the predictive effect on a product. As stated by Ajzen (1991), the results indicate that the intention may be influenced by their confidence in the ability to buy in the neighborhood's commerce and services and these perception of control over the decision can increase the purchase intention in neighborhood commerce and services (Loera et al., 2022).

The TPB (Theory of Planned Behavior) predictors explained purchase intentions in local commerce and services, aligning with Ajzen's (1991) findings. Furthermore, Khan et al. (2023) demonstrated that these impacts significantly influence purchase intentions in neighborhood commerce and services.

## 6. Conclusion

The main objective of the present study was to analyze the consumer's intention to buy in the neighborhood commerce and services and to answer the research question: does Behavioral Intention positively influence the intention and continuity of purchase in the neighborhood commerce and services? Evidence was found that this influence is positive. The results demonstrated the favorable evaluation of the consumer regarding this type of behavior, as well as his perception that other people support this type of behavior and that it is easy to perform it. The results also showed the perception of consumer that buying in the neighborhood commerce and services is the right behavior, which makes it a better person and that the Covid-19 pandemic influenced the purchase intention in neighborhood commerce and services, indicating the positive influence of behavioral intention to buy at neighborhood commerce and services.

There are indications that Moral Attitude, e.g. doing what is right, and Impact of Covid-19, positively influenced Attitude, while Empathic Concern for other people of the neighborhood commerce and services had no influence on Attitude. Attitude, Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioral Control, components of the TPB, positively influenced purchase intention in neighborhood commerce and services.

This study contributes to the literature and research field by filling a gap through the extension of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TBP) with the addition of three dimensions influencing the Attitude (Empathic Concern, Moral Attitude, and Impact of Covid-19).

By extending the TPB in the context of neighborhood commerce and services in an emerging country, this research adds to the existing theory variables that may be more appropriate to analyze purchase intention for retail in these neighborhood commerce and services.

The practical implications of the study point to the fact that it can help retailers and marketing professionals in the sector. The positive effects presented indicate that retail managers of neighborhood commerce and services need to pay attention and act proactively, understand that this type of commerce impacts the consumer in different ways, and incorporate specific actions to reach their potential consumers and improve the buying behavior and use of consumers of neighborhood stores and services.

Marketers and managers need to know that the Moral Attitude and Impact of Covid-19 significantly and positively impact the attitude towards shopping in neighborhood commerce and services. This helps in the composition of communication material according to the requirements to increase the level of knowledge of the target audience, leading them to obtain positive feelings when they buy in neighborhood commerce and services.

### 6.1. Limitations and future perspectives

This study highlighted the importance of amplifying the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) through the influence of Moral Attitude, Empathic Concern, and the Impact of Covid-19 on Attitude and limitations that pave the way for future research that should be considered. The study was conducted in a single country (Brazil) at a single point in time and after almost two years of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The study may not have included all relevant cultural and economic diversities at a more aggregated level. Thus, considering different cultures, backgrounds, and purchasing power, applying the model in different countries is suggested. The research investigated purchase intentions in neighborhood's commerce and services together. Future research could analyze and compare purchase intention in commerce and services separately.

The study was conducted considering mainly those constructs that were part of the Theory of Planned Behavior, in addition to the constructs of Moral Attitude, Empathic Concern, and the Impact of Covid-19. Future studies should investigate the role of other vital constructs, such as involvement, trust, and values, that can

act as moderators or mediators for the various model constructs. The other side of the relationship can also be investigated: owners of commerce and services in the neighborhood.

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