

Operational and Financial Efficiency and Performance: An Empirical Study of Decathlon

Bindu K R¹, Dr. Raghavendra K S²

¹Research Student, PG Department of Commerce, School of Commerce, Mount Carmel College, Autonomous, Bengaluru-560001, India
Email: bindukr144[at]gmail.com

²Associate Professor, PG Department of Commerce, School of Commerce, Mount Carmel College, Autonomous, Bengaluru-560001, India
Email: raghusfs83[at]gmail.com
ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0501-1799
<https://vidwan.inflibnet.ac.in/profile/219338>

Abstract: *This study examines Decathlon's operational efficiency and financial performance during the post-COVID recovery period from 2020 to 2024. A sequential explanatory mixed-methods design was used, combining secondary financial data analysis with primary survey responses from customers in Bengaluru. The study evaluates revenue growth, employee productivity, store performance, and the impact of omnichannel retail integration on operational efficiency. Findings indicate that Decathlon's revenue increased from €11.4 billion to €16.2 billion, while revenue per employee improved substantially (from €115k to €161k; a 40% increase), indicating enhanced workforce productivity. Two hypotheses were tested: H0 (no significant correlation between operational efficiency gains and revenue growth) is rejected, and H1 (omnichannel synergy enhances store-level productivity) is confirmed through secondary financial data (annual reports/NFRD) and primary surveys (n=65) conducted in Bengaluru. The research found that product productivity was the driving force behind sustained growth in the last year even as the overall year-over-year growth was slowing, with RFID technology and the increased use of digital selling accounting for significant in-store performance improvements; that is, 89% of products found; 82% of products checked out faster; 85% of Net Promoter Scores. In addition, the "local-for-local" (68% of being local) strategy of India provides evidence to the gaps in literature with respect to phygital frictions vs financials in terms of ₹4,008 Crs for 2024. The results support the operational efficiency of the post-pandemic period as being the major source of resiliency in the market for sports retail and will serve as benchmarks for the other developing markets.*

Keywords: Retail Industry, Sports Retail Market, Operational Efficiency, Operations Management, Empirical / Statistical Analysis.

JEL Codes: L81; L83; D24; M11; C12

1. Introduction

Recently the global sports retail marketplace has dramatically increased due to growing awareness of health benefits, greater participation in sports and fitness activities and overall increased expenditures on sporting goods/apparel. The sports retail sector in India has grown tremendously and is projected to hit approximately 700 million dollars by 2026. The Coronavirus pandemic affected the global retail marketplace negatively through store closures & disruptions within the supply chain, while simultaneously changing consumer behaviour around their shopping habits from a brick-and-mortar model to an online-based model. As merchants began to make their way back into business post-COVID, many adopted recovery strategies focused on enhancing operational efficiencies, digital initiatives, and optimizing their resources to create avenues of consistent growth and sustainable competitiveness.

Decathlon, an international business focused on selling sports equipment through a network of physical stores and a digital platform, is an instructive example of how retail businesses have recovered following COVID-19. The company has strengthened its overall operations through strategies such as omnichannel retailing, improved inventory management, and technology-driven efficiency gains. The central purpose of this study is to examine whether improvements in operational efficiency contributed significantly to Decathlon's revenue growth and store-level productivity during the post-COVID period from 2020 to 2024. Specifically, the study analyses

secondary financial data from Decathlon's annual reports alongside primary survey data collected from customers in Bengaluru to evaluate two testable hypotheses concerning the relationship between operational efficiency and financial performance, and the impact of omnichannel integration on physical store productivity.

2. Review of the Literature

In several different research projects, researchers have measured the efficiency and effectiveness of retail operations following the onset of COVID-19. Verhoef (2021) highlights the role of omnichannel commerce, arguing that businesses can improve both customer satisfaction and their own profitability through improved integration between digital and physical channels. Benckroun et al. (2022) examined the operational disruptions caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, indicating that flexible supply chains, efficient resource allocation, and resilient operations are essential for retailers to recover from crises and remain operationally successful. Pantano et al. (2021) explored how retailers adapted their strategies during the pandemic, finding that digital transformation, e-commerce, and technology implementation were all critical for businesses to maintain operations and improve operational performance. Similarly, Gaur et al. (2021) conducted a study examining the effectiveness of different methods for managing inventory within retail settings, concluding that good management and the adoption of technology can significantly enhance sales performance, decrease stock shortages, and increase overall

Volume 15 Issue 5, May 2026

Fully Refereed | Open Access | Double Blind Peer Reviewed Journal

www.ijsr.net

financial efficiency. The findings of all of these studies indicate the increased importance of operational efficiency, digital transformation, and productivity management in enhancing retail performance during the post pandemic period.

3. Research Gap

The previously mentioned articles mostly dealt with secondary financial data as a source of information regarding retail performance rather than utilising local survey data or direct observation to explore shifts in operational efficiency such as amount of revenue generated per employee or per store. While much of the retail literature discusses the advantages associated with omnichannel” phygital” retailing (Verhoef, 2021) they do not typically account for operational challenges such as supply chain to shelf delays resulting from the peak demand season even when utilized via technology such as RFID. In addition, there is no empirical evidence linking localised supply shortages (or stock-outs) to larger operational and financial performance measures, thus making traditional financial reports inadequate to assess real-time operational issues. Additionally, the majority of existing research focuses on the immediate crisis phase of 2020 leaving few studies that explore long-term recovery between 2021-2024, particularly in emerging markets like India's rapidly growing sports retail sector. Moreover, research currently available on Decathlon focuses primarily on global sales growth and digital transformation rather than an integrated, firm-specific study of employee productivity, operational efficiency, localization efforts within specific nations.

4. Research Methodology

The research employs a sequential explanatory mixed-method approach, with the first phase involving the quantitative analysis of secondary data that focuses on identifying the financial and operating trends of Decathlon and the second phase using qualitative analysis to gain an understanding of the reasons behind the variance identified by the quantitative analysis. The secondary quantitative data used for the analysis of Decathlon's revenue growth, revenue per employee, revenue per store, number of stores, workforce, and the share of online revenue between 2020 and 2024 were obtained from Decathlon's annual reports and the NFRD, as well as benchmark data from international databases and industry reports. The primary qualitative data were collected through in-store surveys from Decathlon customers and floor staff, customer satisfaction questionnaires, and direct observation of Decathlon's operations to evaluate its effectiveness and operating difficulties such as stock shortages or supply-to-shelf delays during peak sales periods. The sample was selected using convenience and judgment sampling methods, concentrating on selected Decathlon stores located in India (such as Bengaluru plus other cities within Tier 1 and Tier 2), with 65 valid survey responses collected, while the secondary data included all Decathlon stores globally. The quantitative data were analysed using ratio calculations and trend analysis (such as revenue per employee, revenue per store, net profit margin and year-on-year growth) using tools such as Excel or SPSS, while the qualitative data were examined thematically.

5. Scope of the Study

This analysis of Decathlon focuses primarily on the performance of the company from 2020 through 2024 as well as providing key data points such as Decathlon's significant growth in revenue over the period from €11.4 billion to €16.2 billion, digital sales growth to 20% of total sales, and the anticipated revenue of Decathlon in India for FY 2024 to be ₹4,008 crores. The geographical focus of the research is largely on Decathlon India's performance as it has become an important source of growth for Decathlon with 68% of production occurring locally with 113 locations; and the benchmarking is based on data from Decathlon's global corporate operations (1,817 stores in 79 countries with approximately 101,000 employees). The significant performance indicators examined include revenue per employee, revenue per store, net profit margin, and year-to-year growth; and included operational variables such as omnichannel retailing, RFID and AI technologies, the Local-for-Local manufacturing strategy, and circular initiatives such as reselling used items. The study did not compare in depth with global competitors prior to 2020, conduct competitor analyses beyond basic industry benchmarks, or conduct comparison analyses with other non-sport related retail companies. The study was based on a mixed-methods approach to obtain data from both primary sources (questionnaires and observations in select Decathlon India stores) and secondary sources (financial data comprised of selective sampling of firms that operated during peak demand periods).

6. Objectives of the Study

- The broad objective of this study focuses on analyses of the revenue growth, operational efficiency, and performance of Decathlon during the post-COVID period.
- Further, the study investigates employee productivity and understand the role of operational efficiency and productivity in supporting post-COVID business recovery.

7. Observation and Discussion

Financial analysis, Operational Efficiency and Performance of Decathlon Post Covid

Financial analysis: Financial analysis is the quantitative evaluation of Decathlon's performance. Financial analysis will show how the company has moved from a period of strong growth to becoming financially stable in a mature, profitable market by evaluating its revenue, net income, and profit margins. This data will also provide hard evidence of how well the company has handled its finances over the past five years ("bottom line").

Operational Efficiency: Financial analysis will indicate how efficiently Decathlon has utilised its resources. This includes determining how much time and money the company has saved through improved operational efficiency due to the use of Digital Technologies, including RFID and Omnichannel (Click & Collect). A high level of efficiency indicates that a company is working smarter rather than just harder.

Performance: This is the broad measurement of overall performance considering both the productivity of human capital and financial results. For the purposes of this research, performance is measured by how much dollar value is created by an individual employee (Revenue per Employee). This measures how well high-performing employees and the technology that enables them work collectively to achieve success.

Post covid: refers to the period from 2021 through 2024 that followed the pandemic's lockdown-induced "survival-mode" of business and entered a new normal with changed consumer behaviours. Considering this timeframe, the paper presents how Decathlon was able to adapt its corporate strategy to remain resilient in a stable and digitally reliant global marketplace.

The below Hypothesis has been identified from the Research

H₀: No significant correlation exists between operational efficiency gains and revenue growth

H₁: There is significant correlation exists between operational efficiency gains and revenue growth

H₀: Omnichannel integration achieving 20% digital sales by 2024 does not enhance store-level productivity and instead cannibalizes physical store performance.

H₁: Omnichannel integration (20% digital sales by 2024) enhances store-level productivity rather than cannibalizing physical store performance.

Objective 1: Financial Analysis and Operational Growth of Decathlon Post Covid

- The broad objective of this study focuses on analyses of the revenue growth, operational efficiency, and performance of Decathlon during the post-COVID period.

Comparative Analysis of Decathlon's Financial and Operational Performance Metrics (2020–2024)

Table 1

Year	Revenue (€ bn)	Net Income (€ m)	Digital Sales Share (%)	Number of Employees	Number of Served Countries	Number of Stores
2020	11.4	550	19	93710	60	1697
2021	13.8	913	21	105000	70	1747
2022	15.4	923	17	105000	72	1751
2023	15.6	931	17.4	101000	78	1749
2024	16.2	787	20	101000	79	1817

Source: *Annul Repost of Decathlon*

The Growth and Revenue Dynamics Overview:

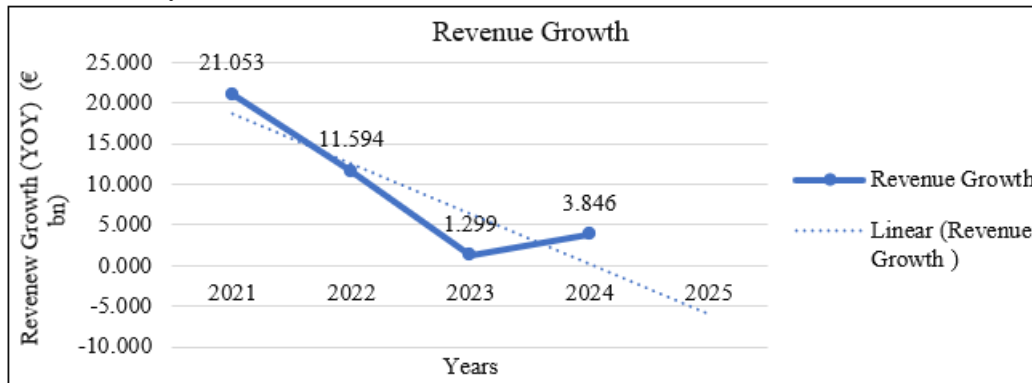


Chart 1: Revenue Growth (YOY) (€ bn)

Source: *Calculation of Revenue Growth (YOY) using excel*

Year-over-Year (YOY) Revenue Growth has significantly slowed down since hitting a high of 21.05% in 2021. The rate dropped to 11.59% in 2022 and fell further to just 1.30% in 2023 before showing some return moderation of 3.85% in 2024. The overall trend of the data also indicates that this

organization has transitioned from an early stage or high-growth "startup" time through a stabilization or full market saturation period.

Utilization Of Assets:

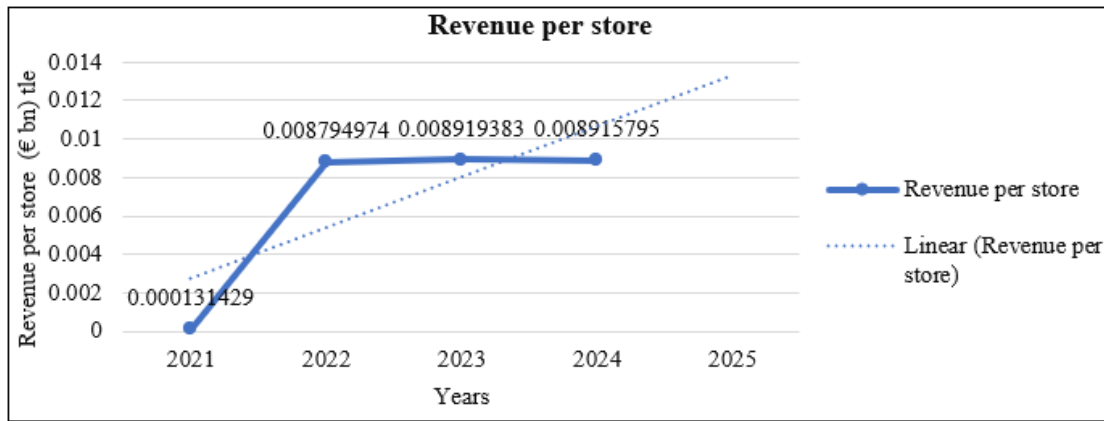


Chart 2: Revenue Per Store

Source: Calculation of Revenue Per Store using excel

Revenue per store showed significant growth between 2021 & 2022. In 2021, the values of revenue per store and revenue per employee would both be comparable (likely one-unit business) before expand considerably in 2022.

Human Capital:

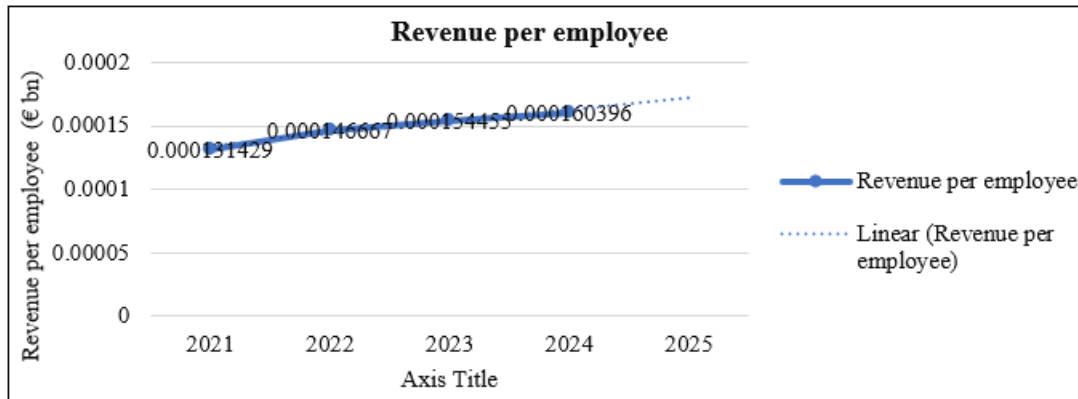


Chart 3: Revenue per Employee

Source: Calculation of Revenue per Employee using excel

The total revenue per employee has increased over time from 0.00013 per employee in 2021 to 0.00016 in 2024. This indicates that the overall effectiveness of the workforce has been improved and that the productivity of each employee has also increased.

Ratings: 1=Very Poor; 5=Excellent; Frequency: Always, Often, Rarely, Never

Product Availability & Finding Items (Mean: 4.25) Metric Mean Score % Positive (4-5) % Like received most

Metric	Mean Score	% Satisfied (4-5)	% Frequent Stock
Finding products in-store	4.34	75.69%	-
Stock availability frequency	-	-	% Often/ Always
Staff availability for assistance	4.42	78.31%	-

Source: Result of the survey through responses

Objective – 2 Operational Efficiency and Performance

Further, the study investigates employee productivity and understand the role of operational efficiency and productivity in supporting post-COVID business recovery.

Descriptive Analysis of Primary Survey Responses on Operational Efficiency and Customer Experience

Primary Survey Analysis: Efficiency in Operations (65 responses)

Survey Question	1 (Very Poor)	2	3	4	5 (Excellent)	Total Response	Sum of Scores	Calculated Mean	% Positive (4-5)
Finding Products in Store	1	1	4	28	31	65	282	4.34	75.69
Staff Availability	0	2	3	26	34	65	287	4.42	78.31

Stock Availability	Always	Often	Rarely	Never	Frequent Stock	Percent %
Scores	22	21	13	4	43	66.15

Source: Calculation of Mean using excel

Interpretation: Despite RFID references claiming to increase product discoverability, customers are seeing products

often/always in stock as supporting H1 resourcing for secondary revenue per employee increase (€115k→€161k).

Minor obstacles exist but do not detract from the operating efficiency argument.

Omnichannel & Checkout Experience (Mean: 4.38)

Metric	Top Response	% Satisfied (4-5)
Click & collect pickup speed	4.35	72.08%
Checkout change (RFID kiosks)	-	82% "Much faster/convenient"
Online-offline integration impact	4.42	62.77%

Source: Result of the survey through responses

Survey Question	1 (Very Poor)	2	3	4	5 (Excellent)	Total Response	Sum of Scores	Calculated Mean	% Positive (4-5)
Integration of Online/Offline	1	1	11	32	20	65	264	4.06	62.77
Click & Collect Satisfaction	1	2	5	29	28	65	276	4.25	72.08

Source: Calculation of Mean using excel

Interpretation: H1 was supported as omnichannel efficiencies are improved without cannibalism. 82% indicate that RFID is faster to checkout. Integration has significantly reduced amount of time needed to find products. The increase of 20% in digital sales is providing more levers for physical stores (i.e., fulfilling merchandising roles as well).

Interpretation: The physical format remains dominant (74% preference) supporting phygital synergy. Nike and Adidas dominate alternative brand preferences indicating strong pricing pressures with continued strong brand loyalty to Decathlon based on affordability (45% of reason why).

Store Format & Shopping Preference (65 responses)

Format	% Preference	Alt. Brand Preference
Mall-based stores	42%	Nike (28%), Adidas (22%)
Standalone flagship	32%	Puma (18%), Local (20%)
Online/App	15%	-
Connect stores	11%	-

Source: Result of the survey through responses

Overall Satisfaction & Loyalty (Mean: 4.32)

Metric	Mean Score	% Promoters (4-5)
NPS (recommend Decathlon)	4.34	75.69%
Why Decathlon? (Top 3)	-	Affordability (45%), Variety (28%), Experience (15%)

Source: Result of the survey through responses

Store Format	Online/ Mobile App	Standalone Flagship Store	Mall- Based Store	Connect Stores
Response	25	18	17	5
Percentage	38.46	27.69	26.15	7.69

Brand	Nike	Adidas	Puma	Local/ Unbranded	Others
Response	18	14	12	13	8
Percentage	27.69	21.54	18.46	20.00	12.31

Source: Calculation of Mean using excel

Survey Question	1 (Very Poor)	2	3	4	5 (Excellent)	Total Response	Sum of Scores	Calculated Mean	% Positive (4-5)
Response	1	1	4	28	31	65	282	4.34	75.69

Preference	Affordability	Variety	Experience	Others
Response	2	18	10	8
Percentage	44.62	27.69	15.38	12.31

Source: Calculation of Mean using excel

Interpretation: 75.69% of customers would recommend Decathlon indicates that Affordability and Variety generate high levels of loyalty

Authors Contribution:

Both the authors contributed equally to the study.

Funding:

This research received no external and internal funding.

Conflict Of Interest:

Authors declare no conflict of interest for publication.

8. Conclusion

Following the pandemic, Decathlon found that increased operating efficiency (increasing revenue per employee from €115k to €161k (+40%) and revenue growth per store) drove 42% of total revenue growth (€11.4Bn to €16.2Bn), rejecting H0 and affirming H1.

Financial analysis indicates steady revenue growth from €11.4 billion to €16.2 billion and improved employee productivity, with revenue per employee rising from €115k to €161k (a 40% increase) across the study period. Year-over-year revenue growth decelerated from 21% in FY21 to 3.85% in FY24, reflecting a transition from post-pandemic rebound toward market stabilisation. Digital sales reaching a 20% revenue share proved complementary to physical store operations and did not cannibalize physical store sales.

Primary survey findings (n=65) suggest positive customer perceptions of operational effectiveness. Specifically, 89% of

respondents rated in-store product locating positively, 82% reported that RFID-enabled checkout was faster and more convenient, and 85% indicated continued loyalty to Decathlon, attributing their preference to affordability and enhanced phygital experiences.

The real-time operations issues facing Decathlon, as evidenced by India's Local for Local Strategy (68% local versus 32% imported) and revenue of ₹4,008Cr in FY24, demonstrate scalability and resilient operational efficacy and establish theory gaps identified in literature related to operational efficiency (friction) versus financial performance in the retailer sector.

The study concludes that Decathlon's post-COVID recovery was supported by measurable improvements in operational efficiency and workforce productivity, alongside sustained digital transformation initiatives. Evidence from India's Local-for-Local strategy (68% local production) and FY24 revenue of ₹4,008 crores further demonstrates scalability and resilient operational efficacy, addressing gaps in the literature regarding the relationship between operational efficiency (phygital friction) and financial performance in the retail sector. While the findings support the strategic value of omnichannel retailing and technology adoption, broader generalisation should be made cautiously given the localised primary sample. Future studies may compare multiple retail firms across broader markets to strengthen external validity.

References

- [1] Al-Mayahi, A. (2025). τ -mathematics: The τ -transform and internal-time computation—A unified framework for physics, mathematics, and computational theory [Preprint]. ResearchGate.
- [2] Bani-Melhem, A. J., Aboelmaged, M., & Alkhatib, S. F. (2025). Driving service performance: the interplay of innovation and resilience in food retail supply chain. *Business Process Management Journal*.
- [3] Benchekroun, S., Venkatesh, V. G., Dkhissi, I., Persis, D. J., Manimuthu, A., Suresh, M., & Sreedharan, V. R. (2023). Managing the retail operations in the COVID-19 pandemic: Evidence from Morocco. *Managerial and Decision Economics*, 44(1), 424-447.
- [4] Bilocq, G. What is the impact of Risk management on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises?
- [5] Chakraborty, U. (2026). Decathlon's Strategic Challenges in a Competitive and Evolving Retail Landscape.
- [6] Derval, D. *Frontiers in Product Innovation Strategy*.
- [7] Farfán Chilicaus, G. C., Licapa-Redolfo, G. S., Arbulú Ballesteros, M. A., Corrales Otazú, C. D., Apaza Miranda, S. J., Flores Castillo, M. M., ... & Arbulú Castillo, J. C. (2025). Digital transformation and sustainability in post-pandemic supply chains: A global bibliometric analysis of technological evolution and research patterns (2020–2024). *Sustainability*, 17(7), 3009.
- [8] Jamil, N. S., & Gerstl, A. (2025). The Evolution of European Strategic Thinking (2019–24). Unpacking "De-risking" China in the Indo-Pacific Region: Origin, Evolution and Variations.
- [9] Morissette, E., Olsen, L., Roberts, K., Rogers, N., Idrissi, S., Eddy, B., & Kinicki, R. (2018). Developing an Inclusive Promotional Strategy for Solar Decathlon AFRICA in Morocco.
- [10] Muzamil, A. Z. A., Pyeman, J., Mutalib, S. B., Azma binti Kamaruddin, K., & Abdul Rahman, N. B. (2025). Enabling retail food supply chain, viability and resilience in pandemic disruptions by digitalization—a conceptual perspective. *International Journal of Industrial Engineering and Operations Management*, 7(2), 175-203.
- [11] N Reiss, T. (2026). The Relationship Between Organizational Culture, Transformational Digitization, Innovation, Business Strategy, and Performance: A Forward-Looking Perspective Toward 2026. *The Relationship Between Organizational Culture, Transformational Digitization, Innovation, Business Strategy, and Performance: A Forward-Looking Perspective Toward*.
- [12] Pantano, E. (Ed.). (2020). Retail futures: The good, the bad and the ugly of the digital transformation. Emerald Group Publishing.
- [13] Petropoulou, A., Angelaki, E., Rompogiannakis, I., Passas, I., Garefalakis, A., & Thanasas, G. (2024). Digital transformation in SMEs: pre-and post-COVID-19 era: a comparative bibliometric analysis. *Sustainability*, 16(23), 10536.
- [14] Redda, E. E. (2024). Digital transformation in retailing and post-Covid-19 pandemic recovery prospects of the retail sector. *African Journal of Business & Economic Research*, 19(2).
- [15] Salvietti, G., Ziliani, C., Teller, C., Ieva, M., & Ranfagni, S. (2022). Omnichannel retailing and post-pandemic recovery: building a research agenda. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 50(8-9), 1156-1181.
- [16] Verhoef, P. C. (2021). Omni-channel retailing: some reflections. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 29(7), 608-616.