

## LETTER OF INFORMATION / CONSENT

### A Study about Perception and Action in a Shifting World

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**Purpose of the Study:**

You are invited to take part in this study on perception and action in a shifting world. This study examines how managers facing COVID-19 disruptions are conceptualizing changes in relationships with customers, employees, suppliers and other partners so as to generate understanding and actionable insight. Through quarterly interviews, the study will track retail managers/owners as they work to make sense of how the future in their sector is unfolding.

The study involves an initial **45-60-minute interview** to be conducted over the phone or through the Zoom video conferencing tool. Further, because we are interested in understanding how decision makers deal with the uncertainty caused by COVID-19 as conditions change and evolve over time, we plan to conduct short **15-20-minute follow-up interviews every three months over the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic (which could last in some form for up to 18 months)**. We will be taking handwritten notes and with your permission, we will audio and/or video record the interview so that we can then transcribe the discussion for accuracy and ease.

**Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts:**

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. All information that you provide will be confidential. While we intend to use direct quotes from the interview, no quotes will be attributed directly to you nor will names be used. Instead, we will refer to respondents as manager/owner of a retailer of a specific type (ie clothing, spa, décor, etc.) and size (approximate # of employees) within a BIA for which we provide generic properties to conceal it's geographic location. However, people are often identifiable through the stories they tell, therefore please only share information that you would feel comfortable sharing with one of your acquaintances. We will make every effort to avoid using stories that appear likely to identify respondents.

If you choose to conduct your interview on Zoom we will follow practices to minimize social risk by adopting best practices for privacy and security. Again, this service is approved for collecting data in this study by the McMaster Research Ethics Board, there is a small risk with any platform such as this of data that is collected on external servers falling outside the control of the research team. A link to their privacy policy is available here (<https://zoom.us/privacy>).

Additionally, the COVID pandemic comes with substantial stress and mental health implications. As a result, the questions we ask might create discomfort. Know that you are not required to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable. Further, if you are struggling with

mental health at this time, look to resources here for help: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/topics/mental-health-wellness.html>

**Potential Benefits:**

Participants have the opportunity contribute to a body of knowledge and insight regarding how retailers can navigate the uncertainty being posed by the crisis associated with the COVID 19 pandemic. We will also be generating on a quarterly basis a practitioner-oriented report that documents the practical and theoretical insights garnered to date. These reports might help retailers navigate the uncertainty in their environments. These reports will be posted at: <https://resilience.degroote.mcmaster.ca/>.

**Confidentiality:**

Your participation in this study is confidential. Only the research team will know your identity and names will be redacted within transcripts. Following transcription, audio/video recordings will be deleted. The members of the research team have each signed confidentiality agreements.

Transcriptions will be made by a research team member, E-Transcription services (see <https://www.etranscription.ca/aboutus>), or through NVivo’s transcription services (<https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-qualitative-data-analysis-software/resources/blog/nvivo-transcription-is-hipaa-compliant>). Please note that whilst this service is approved for collecting data in this study by the McMaster Research Ethics Board, there is a small risk with any platform such as this of data that is collected on external servers falling outside the control of the research team. If you are concerned about this please bring this to the attention of the principal investigator.

Any paper copies of information/data will be kept in a locked desk/cabinet where only Dr. McKnight and the research team will have access to it. Information will be encrypted on a password protected computer or server. Once the study is complete, only an archive of the data will be maintained. The archived data will be held for up to 10 years.

**Participation and Withdrawal:**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study. If you decide not to be a part of the study, you can stop (withdraw) from the interview for whatever reason, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study. Participants will be able to withdraw anytime during the expected 18-month duration of the study (expected: December 21, 2021, or until the effects of COVID-19 have neutralized). In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided can be destroyed if desired. However, any already published data, such as through the quarterly reports, will remain.

You may choose to not answer some of the questions and remain in the study.

**Questions about the Study**

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact a member of the research team. This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

Brent McKnight <a href="mailto:bmcknight@mcmaster.ca">bmcknight@mcmaster.ca</a> (416-788-4097)
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McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat  
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142  
C/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support  
E-mail: [ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca](mailto:ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca)

**For online studies you will be asked to consent to the following:**

**CONSENT**

- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Dr. Brent McKnight of McMaster University.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.
- I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time up until December 31, 2021.
- I have been given a copy of this form.
- I agree to participate in the study.

1. I agree that the interview can be audio/video recorded. I acknowledge that I can turn off my video camera if I wish.

Yes

No

2. I agree that the research team can follow up with me to conduct short 15-20-minute interviews or surveys on a quarterly basis (3 months).

yes

no

3.  Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the quarterly and final study's results.

Please send them to me at this email address \_\_\_\_\_

No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.