

Decomposing Changes in Consumer Food Expenditures Among Retail Channels: The Impact of the State of Emergency During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Summary

Consumers had to shelter in place during the spread of COVID-19. They needed to buy groceries from supermarkets and online stores, such as EC. Consumers increased the opportunities of eating in their households because the state of emergency (SOE) in Japan was implemented in April 2020. Some of them who felt that they were at high risk of contracting COVID-19 changed their shopping behaviors, such as using online channels, buying a bulk of foods. Several factors based on these behavioral changes exist, and we decomposed the factor of their changes before/after the SOE. To examine it, we analyzed the purchase history data in the Greater Tokyo area and obtained the following results. First, most consumers continued to visit dominantly offline channels, such as supermarkets although the SOE had begun. Second, the contributions of offline channels to the expenditures of perishable foods are larger than those of staple and storable foods. Third, the contributions to the changes in expenditures on staple and storable foods are large in online channels, specifically, purchase frequency in online channels has a relatively large impact on the changes after the SOE. These results corroborated that some consumers increased the opportunities for online channel uses derived from increments in purchase frequency. However, its proportion was small.

Key words: COVID-19, Food Consumption, E-Commerce