



# Main Street Resilience During COVID

MAY 18TH, 2021

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Looking at the challenges, adaptations, and help needed on Main Street

Interim Update

# Researchers



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# Resilience to COVID

Since COVID hit last March, I have been studying organizations and their processes of resilience. This builds on prior research studying organizational and community resilience to natural disasters



BDBA

We are studying retailers and restaurant resilience to COVID



OBIAA

We are studying the role of BIA's in the resilience of their communities.



Non-Profit Resilience

We are studying how non-profit organizations are responding to COVID

# Through today's discussion we will:

1

Air some key insights

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Today, I will present some of the key insights that have come from our study so far.

2

Discuss them together

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With each topic, I have a question I hope we can briefly discuss together



# Businesses must respond to changing consumer patterns

- COVID is driving dramatic shifts in consumer's work, commuting, and recreation
- Opportunities created "winning" categories such as kitchen stores, garden centres, and home redecorating
- Challenges for highly "social" businesses that are highly social in nature such as aesthetics and weddings/events
- Consumers are (re)connecting with what is important to them; an unfreezing is occurring
- Stay close to customers to understand changing habits and shopping patterns

What habits are changing for your customers (old and new?)

**H A B I T S**





# Shop **local movement** has driven some business to main street

- Large outpourings of support for local businesses - particularly restaurants
- Driven by both less international travel and concern over sustaining local businesses through the pandemic
- Hampered by deteriorating financial outlooks and online conveniences

***"I think people are being more conscious, conscious of spending their money locally. Trying to keep their money in the places they want to survive."***

Retailer Owner, #7

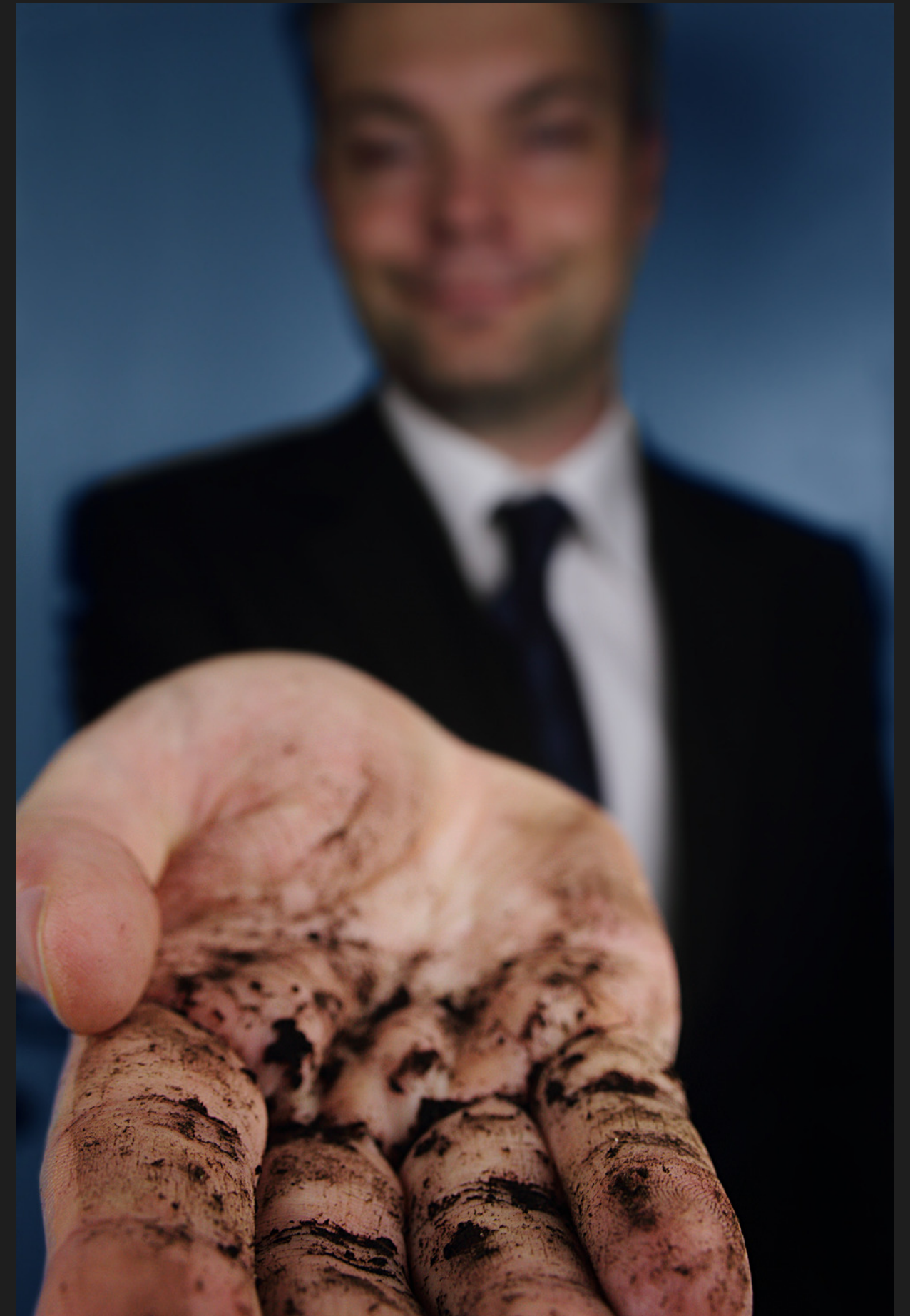
How sustainable is this local movement?  
What can businesses and networks like BEN, the BDBA and OBIAA do to continue to drive and sustain local interest?



# How can owners ensure they are **working "on"** their business not just "in" their businesses

- Various causes for owner's working "in" their business
  - Challenge making payroll
  - Employees fearful of returning to work
  - Government subsidies encouraging staying at home
  - Mental health of employees
  - On and off again lockdowns
- Some owners enjoying reconnecting with customers and their operation
- Risk of being stuck in the weeds and losing that focus on where the business is headed

**Have you been focusing enough of your time working "on" your business as you should?**







# Creating appealing in-store atmosphere challenged by COVID rules

- Policing and monitoring created potential for customer conflicts
- Decreased store capacity, lines, and safety procedures reducing shopping spontaneity and enjoyment
- Diminished physical connection with product and services

*“We actually became more concerned about being policemen and monitoring number of people in store, making sure they were sanitized, initially, making sure that they were wearing the masks that we provided”  
(Retail Owner #8)*

How have you been working to create a welcoming atmosphere despite COVID restrictions? How can you restore physical trust?



# Business relationships continue to be critical in navigating COVID

- Excellent peer to peer support among main street businesses
- Inventory challenges required proactive supplier management
- Assessing quality dimensions virtually remains difficult
- Supply chain disruptions rippling through; hitting some sectors harder than others



What business relationships have been critical for you as you navigate COVID?

"Hugo Boss, everything was virtual. It was just so nasty, you know? I mean, you get a pant, you hold it up, and good it's a nice brown pant. What's the texture like? What's the fit feel like? We try things on when we go because we buy for you, you know, we know who our customer is."

RETAIL OWNER #11

# Digital infrastructure critical for main street businesses

- COVID accelerated investments in POS, websites, and social media
- However, many businesses remain reluctant to use social media and digital channels
- Some retailers increasing specialization to sharpen customer value propositions

How does your digital infrastructure reconcile with your physical presence?



**“WE GOT A MUCH BETTER ONLINE PRESENCE. WE’VE CHANGED OUR POS SYSTEM, SO NOW WE CAN DO MOBILE PAYMENTS FROM, LIKE I CAN CHECK SOMEBODY OUT IN THE PARKING LOT OR I CAN CHECK THEM OUT OUTSIDE ON AN IPAD HOOKED UP TO MONERIS. AND YEAH... THROUGH THIS, FOR A WHILE, WE BECAME A DISTRIBUTION WAREHOUSE.”**

*Retail Owner #2*





# What does the **new normal** look like in your business?

- Government interventions (wage and rent supports, loans) providing breathing room
- Many businesses seeing challenging short to medium term

What looks to be the new normal in your sector?