In online surveys conducted by Urban Studies during lockdown, 74% of shoppers indicated that they immediately will return to their centre to shop. Two clear behavioural trends emerged from this research:

Almost half of the respondents in different surveys indicated that shopping should be allowed like before the lockdown period started. This group will continue their visits to shopping centres as in the past and they also prefer the normal shopping hours. This specific trend was also confirmed during the first few days after The lockdown period ended and large numbers of shoppers returning.

The 2nd group is much more cautious and will avoid shopping centres or only conduct destination shopping with much shorter dwell time and fewer visits. This group also expect to change their shopping behaviour drastically in future.
The main emphasis in all these studies is the very strong focus on safety issues including sanitising at entrances as well as at shop entrances, the wearing of face masks and the importance of social distancing.

Social distancing will also be very important in play areas, cinemas, gyms, restaurants and food courts once re-opening. The support levels of these facilities are expected to be much lower especially during Level 3 and 2 regulations.

The expectation is that most shoppers will return to their current buying behaviour in terms of clothing. However, there was a clear indication that less money will be spent on clothing.

This is a clear indication of the impact of the lockdown period as well as economic pressures.

Grocery stores will be supported as in the past. There is however a strong movement to support neighbourhood centres with lower support for regional shopping centres.
“WHAT WILL THE TRENDS BE?”

In China only 70% of the shoppers returned after one month and the main reason was to buy clothing. The same trend is expected to happen in South Africa and therefore the opening of all clothing stores should be allowed as soon as possible.

There is a strong tendency to buy online and to make use of deliveries. Previous research by Urban Studies indicated that 49% of middle- and upper-income shoppers already buy online. It is expected that this will probably increase to 55%- 60% during Levels 4 and 3.

THE RESEARCH CLEARLY CONFIRMS A DUAL TENDENCY OF THE OLD NORMAL AND A NEW WAY OF LIVING AND SHOPPING.

Safety is an important element associated with the opening of restaurants. This include the sanitising, masks, social distancing and to avoid contact with too many waiters and other people in the same space.

The shoppers clearly would like to have detailed information about trading hours, safety precautions, and a schedule on the re-opening of specific stores in different stages of the lockdown release.

EVERYTHING IS UNCERTAIN AND THEREFORE NEW INSIGHTS FROM SHOPPERS SHOULD BE OBTAINED