



Understanding how young urban consumers in Gaborone make purchase choices in the digital marketplace: A qualitative exploration

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Abstract

Purpose: The study examined how young urban consumers in Gaborone, Botswana, navigate digital shopping platforms, focusing on decision-making processes, experiences, and engagement with online sellers.

Methodology/Design: A qualitative approach was employed, using semi-structured interviews with 20 purposively selected young consumers who actively shop online. Data were analyzed thematically, with trustworthiness ensured through pretesting, member checking and maintaining an audit trail.

Findings: Four themes emerged for each objective. For decision-making, participants emphasized price sensitivity, product quality and authenticity, convenience, and social influence. Regarding experiences and engagement, trust and security, lifestyle motivation, emotional satisfaction, and communication with sellers were key factors influencing online interactions.

Implications: The study highlights the importance of trust, user-friendly platforms, social influence and responsive communication in shaping youth engagement in e-commerce. These insights can guide online retailers, marketers, and policymakers to improve platform adoption and consumer satisfaction.

Originality/Value: The study contributes context-specific evidence on online consumer behaviour in Botswana, linking international theories, including the Technology Acceptance Model and Consumer Decision-Making Theory, to local digital shopping practices.

Keywords: Online shopping, consumer behaviour, gaborone, digital platforms, youth engagement, technology acceptance model, decision-making

Introduction

The growth of digital commerce has changed the way people shop across many parts of the world, and Gaborone is experiencing this shift in its own way. Young adults in the city now use online stores, social media shops, and mobile payment platforms more often than ever before. This group is usually quick to explore new trends and new ways of buying everyday items, from clothing to electronics to beauty products. As digital options expand, their buying habits are shaped not only by price and convenience but also by social influence, trust in online sellers, and the way products are presented online (Mogomotsi & Phiri, 2021)^[10]. Even though online shopping is growing, many young consumers still mix online browsing with in-store visits, creating a blended pattern that is not yet well understood in Botswana's context.

The digital marketplace in Gaborone has also become more crowded, with local shops using social media and small online platforms to reach customers. These sellers rely heavily on Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp to promote products and engage buyers. Young consumers often depend on comments, reviews, and word-of-mouth shared online before deciding whether to buy something. Studies in other African cities show that trust, delivery reliability, and the appearance of the seller's page all shape the final decision (Kusi & Addo, 2022). There is reason to expect similar influences in Gaborone, but there is still little local research that explains how these young consumers actually think and feel when choosing where and what to buy online. While the digital market keeps growing, concerns remain about privacy, fake products, delivery delays, and unclear return policies. Young people may still hesitate to buy

online unless they feel safe and assured. Their personal stories, frustrations, and motivations can reveal deeper insights into how they manage these concerns. A qualitative study allows space for such voices, helping to paint a clearer picture of how they balance excitement for convenience with the fear of being misled (Sekwati & Motshegwa, 2023)^[14]. Understanding these experiences is important because digital buying habits among the youth often shape long-term market trends.

Problem Statement

Even with the rapid rise of digital shopping in Gaborone, there is limited research that explains how young urban consumers actually make their purchase decisions online. Existing work mostly focuses on general e-commerce trends in Botswana, with very little attention to the lived experiences, emotions, and real-life decision paths of young shoppers. As a result, sellers, policymakers, and digital platforms do not fully understand what encourages or discourages young consumers from buying online. This gap makes it harder for businesses to design digital marketing strategies that truly meet the expectations of this group. A deeper, qualitative exploration is needed to understand the thoughts, trust concerns, social influences, and personal reasons behind their choices.

Significance Of The Study

The study offers value in several ways. First, it brings forward the voices of young people in Gaborone, allowing their real experiences to inform a growing digital economy. Their insights can help online sellers understand what builds trust, what creates doubt, and what encourages repeated

buying. Second, the findings can help local businesses improve the way they present products online, interact with customers, and manage service quality. Third, the study offers knowledge that policymakers and consumer protection bodies can use to strengthen digital market standards, especially in areas related to transparency and online buyer safety. Lastly, the study contributes to academic discussions by providing locally grounded evidence from Botswana, showing how young consumers navigate online shopping within a unique cultural and economic setting.

Study Objective

The study sets out clear goals to guide the exploration of how young people in Gaborone make choices in the digital shopping space. These objectives help focus the inquiry and shape the direction of the findings. Specifically, the study seeks to

1. Explore how young urban consumers in Gaborone think through their choices when buying from digital platforms, focusing on the factors that guide their final decisions and;
2. Gain insight into the personal experiences, concerns, and motivations that shape how young people in Gaborone engage with online sellers and digital shopping spaces.

Literature Review: theoretical framework

Theoretical Framework

The study is underpinned by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Consumer Decision-Making Theory

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model argues that a person's willingness to use a digital system depends mainly on how useful they believe it is and how easy it feels to navigate (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh & Bala, 2020) ^[3, 17]. When these two beliefs are strong, people are more open to adopting the technology in their daily routines. For young consumers in Gaborone, TAM helps explain why certain online shopping platforms feel more appealing than others. It offers insight into how perceptions of convenience, clarity, and general ease shape their comfort level and their readiness to complete purchases through digital channels.

Consumer Decision-Making Theory

Consumer Decision-Making Theory describes the mental path individuals follow when choosing what to buy, starting from recognizing a need to comparing options and finally selecting a seller (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019) ^[13]. This process is shaped by personal preferences, trust, social influence, and previous experiences. For young online shoppers in Gaborone, the theory helps reveal the thoughts, emotions, and small judgments they make as they move from browsing to an actual purchase. It offers a clearer view of how their choices take shape in a digital marketplace where information moves quickly and options are many.

Consumers

Research on consumers has increasingly focused on how people interact with products, brands, and market environments in ways that go beyond simple buying habits. Scholars note that consumers today are more informed, more expressive, and more selective because they have

constant access to information through digital tools (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019) ^[13]. Younger consumers, especially those in urban areas, tend to blend personal values, social identity, and convenience when making decisions. Studies show that this group often seeks authenticity, clear communication, and strong value from the brands they choose (Adams & Motsomi, 2020) ^[1]. Their preferences are shaped by everyday experiences, peer influence, and the emotional tone of marketing messages. Recent research also suggests that modern consumers are not passive recipients of advertising but active participants who compare options, question credibility, and evaluate risks before committing to a purchase (Kusi & Addo, 2022). This shift highlights how consumer behavior is becoming more complex and layered, shaped by a mix of practical needs, emotional responses, trust considerations, and technological exposure.

Purchase Choices

Purchase choices refer to the steps and mental processes consumers go through before deciding what to buy. Scholars explain that these choices often follow stages such as recognizing a need, searching for information, weighing alternatives, and selecting a final option (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019) ^[13]. In the digital age, these steps have become quicker but also more complicated. Young consumers now encounter several cues at once: product images, reviews, influencer opinions, brand messages, and peer feedback. Research shows that trust, convenience, and perceived value strongly influence these choices, especially in online environments where the buyer cannot physically inspect the product (Mogomotsi & Phiri, 2021) ^[10]. Many young consumers rely on intuitive impressions, such as how professional a seller's page looks, or how other buyers describe their experiences. Social pressure also plays a role, as people often follow trends seen on social media or within their friend groups. Studies suggest that purchase choices today blend rational judgment with emotional and social meaning, making the final decision a combination of both logic and feeling (Sekwati & Motshegwa, 2023) ^[14].

Digital Marketplace

The digital marketplace has grown into a central space where consumers browse, compare, and purchase goods using smartphones, social media pages, and online shops. Scholars highlight that digital markets offer convenience, speed, and broad access to information, which make them especially attractive to young urban consumers (Venkatesh & Bala, 2020) ^[17]. This environment is shaped by visual presentation, communication style, ease of navigation, and the reliability of digital payment systems. In many African cities, including Gaborone, local sellers use platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp to showcase products and interact directly with buyers (Kusi & Addo, 2022). The digital marketplace is not just a selling space—it is also a social space where consumers read comments, observe others' experiences, and form perceptions about credibility. However, studies also show that challenges such as delivery delays, lack of return policies, and concerns about product authenticity can limit full participation (Sekwati & Motshegwa, 2023) ^[14]. The digital marketplace, therefore, operates as a mixed space of opportunity and caution, where convenience meets uncertainty and where consumer trust plays a central role in shaping transactions.

How young urban consumers in Gaborone think through their choices when buying from digital platforms, focusing on the factors that guide their final decisions

Research on consumer decision-making in digital environments continues to grow as online shopping becomes part of daily life for many young people. Scholars note that young adults tend to approach digital buying with a combination of curiosity and caution, relying heavily on visual cues, platform design, and the ease of accessing product information (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019) ^[13]. Their decision process often begins with a need or desire, followed by a quick search across multiple platforms, where they compare prices, styles, and seller credibility. This behaviour is common in urban African cities, where digital marketplaces are expanding and young consumers are becoming more exposed to online options (Kusi & Addo, 2022). The thinking process therefore includes both rational assessment—such as price fairness or product quality and intuitive judgment, such as how trustworthy the seller appears.

Studies in Botswana and other parts of Southern Africa show that young consumers are especially sensitive to transparency and the level of detail presented on a seller's page (Mogomotsi & Phiri, 2021) ^[10]. Clear product descriptions, high-quality images, and visible customer reviews help shape their confidence. On the other hand, missing information or vague details often raise doubts and delay purchase decisions. The digital environment also introduces new forms of influence. Social media comments, peer recommendations, and the overall layout of the online page all contribute to shaping a mental picture of reliability. Many consumers feel more secure when sellers respond quickly to messages or maintain consistent branding across their online platforms.

Another important factor guiding young people's decisions is perceived risk. Online shopping removes the ability to touch or see the product physically, which pushes consumers to rely on trust signals such as ratings, return policies, and testimonials (Sekwati & Motshegwa, 2023) ^[14]. Young adults in Gaborone often use these cues to filter out sellers they consider unsafe. Delivery reliability also influences decisions, as delays or unclear delivery charges can discourage purchases. The growing use of mobile money and secure payment channels in Botswana has helped improve confidence, but hesitation remains when dealing with unfamiliar sellers.

Overall, the literature suggests that young urban consumers follow a blended thinking process shaped by both practical and emotional considerations. They weigh product value, check credibility cues, observe social reactions, and assess risk before making a final choice. This makes their behaviour more layered than traditional buying patterns, as decisions are shaped by speed of information, digital exposure, and personal judgement.

Insight into the personal experiences, concerns, and motivations that shape how young people in Gaborone engage with online sellers and digital shopping spaces

Young consumers' engagement with digital shopping environments is influenced not only by what platforms offer, but also by how these individuals feel, what they fear, and what motivates them to trust or avoid online sellers. Recent studies highlight that emotional and social

experiences strongly shape how young people interact with digital marketplaces (Adams & Motsomi, 2020) ^[1]. Many young adults enjoy the freedom and convenience of browsing through online shops at any time, often seeing digital shopping as an extension of their lifestyle. For some, online stores provide access to a wider variety of items than physical shops in their local area. This sense of choice and personal control keeps them engaged and curious.

However, engagement is not always smooth. Concerns such as product authenticity, unclear pricing, data privacy, and delivery failures can create a sense of caution. Research in Botswana shows that young consumers often feel compelled to ask sellers extra questions before committing to a purchase, reflecting a desire to reduce uncertainty (Mogomotsi & Phiri, 2021) ^[10]. Many rely on direct chats with sellers to build confidence, while others depend on word-of-mouth from friends who have purchased from the same online page. When concerns are not addressed or communication feels slow, engagement drops and consumers shift to other sellers.

Motivation also plays a central role in shaping behaviour. Studies suggest that young people are often drawn to online shopping because of convenience, trend awareness, and the influence of social media personalities (Kusi & Addo, 2022). Some are motivated by discounts or exclusive online deals, while others shop online as a way of expressing personal identity or keeping up with peers. Emotional satisfaction—such as excitement from receiving a package—can also reinforce engagement. On the other hand, negative past experiences, such as receiving poor-quality goods or losing money to dishonest sellers, tend to create long-term hesitation (Sekwati & Motshegwa, 2023) ^[14].

Another layer of experience relates to the social environment of digital platforms. The comment sections, likes, and shared posts function as social signals that influence how young consumers feel about a seller. Positive interactions, quick customer service, and friendly communication help create a sense of trust. Many young shoppers, especially in Gaborone's urban setting, feel more connected to sellers who present themselves as relatable and consistent. This personal touch makes online spaces feel less risky and more inviting.

In short, the literature shows that young consumers' engagement with online sellers is deeply tied to their lived experiences, emotional comfort, past interactions, and ongoing motivations. Understanding these layers provides a clearer picture of what drives their behaviour in Botswana's growing digital marketplace.

Empirical Review

Studies from different African countries continue to show that young consumers' online shopping behaviour is shaped by a mix of practical, emotional, and technological factors. For instance, in Ghana, Ofori and Appiah-Nimo (2019) ^[12] explored what drives students' engagement with digital shopping by extending the Technology Acceptance Model. They surveyed 580 university students and analysed the data using PLS-SEM to understand how usefulness, ease of use, cost and risk shape online buying. Their findings showed that ease of use strongly influenced how useful students felt online shopping was, yet the real driver behind actual adoption was the cost of the service. Perceived risk only reduced intention, not actual behaviour. The authors argued

that online shopping in Ghana will grow faster if platforms reduce hidden costs and strengthen safety and trust systems (Ofori & Appiah-Nimo, 2019) [12].

A similar focus on young shoppers appeared in the Nigerian study by Nwankwo and colleagues (2019) [11]. They assessed online shopping behaviour among students across the south-south region using a descriptive survey design. With 399 valid responses analysed through multiple regression, they found that demographic factors such as income and internet access shaped the willingness to shop online. Personal purchase experience and time spent on digital platforms also played a role, together with convenience and the clarity of product descriptions. Their work showed that online shopping uptake in Nigeria could slow if platforms ignore these practical expectations of young buyers (Nwankwo *et al.*, 2019) [11].

Furthermore, in Kenya, consumer attention has shifted toward delivery performance as e-commerce expands. Mogire, Kilbourn and Luke (2023) [9] focused on how last-mile delivery influences satisfaction among Nairobi shoppers. With data from 467 respondents analysed through descriptive statistics and mixed-model ANOVA, they found a clear separation between repeat buyers and non-repeat buyers. Repeat buyers reported higher satisfaction with delivery options and tracking systems, while all respondents expressed frustration with returns management. Their study shows that reliable delivery and easy returns are now central to keeping digital customers engaged in Kenya (Mogire *et al.*, 2023) [9].

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research design to explore how young urban consumers in Gaborone made decisions when buying from digital platforms. A qualitative approach was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to gain in-depth understanding of participants’ lived experiences, perceptions, and motivations rather than relying solely on numerical data (Creswell, 2020).

The study was underpinned by an interpretivist philosophical foundation, which assumes that reality is constructed through social interactions and personal experiences (Bryman, 2016). This perspective aligned with the study’s focus on understanding how individual participants interpreted and acted upon their experiences in the digital marketplace.

The population for this study comprised young adults aged 18–35 in Gaborone who had previous experience with online shopping platforms. The sample size included 20 participants, selected purposively to ensure that all participants had meaningful exposure to digital shopping. Purposive sampling was chosen because it allowed the study to focus on participants most likely to provide rich, relevant, and insightful information regarding the research objectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, which enabled participants to freely discuss their experiences while providing guidance around key research themes. Open-ended questions encouraged participants to describe their decision-making processes, motivations, and concerns when engaging with online sellers. This format allowed the researcher to probe deeper into responses and clarify any ambiguities, ensuring rich and detailed data.

To ensure reliability and validity, the study pretested the interview guide to refine questions for clarity and relevance.

Member checking was conducted, allowing participants to confirm that their responses were accurately represented. An audit trail documented all research steps and decisions, providing transparency and supporting the trustworthiness of the findings (Shenton, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These measures ensured that the results reliably reflected the experiences and perspectives of young urban consumers in Gaborone

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, repeatedly read, and coded to identify patterns, ideas, and themes related to consumer decision-making and engagement with digital platforms. Themes were then grouped under broader categories reflecting the study objectives, allowing the researcher to develop a structured understanding of the participants’ experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the research process. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and the measures taken to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Informed consent was obtained prior to interviews, and data were securely stored to prevent unauthorized access. The study also ensured that participation was voluntary and that no harm or undue pressure was placed on any participant (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001).

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 20 young urban consumers in Gaborone participated in the study. Understanding their demographic characteristics provides context for interpreting their experiences and decision-making patterns in digital shopping. The key features captured include age, gender, education level, and frequency of online shopping. Tabl1 presents the results.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Young Urban Consumers

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–24 years	8	40.0%
	25–30 years	9	45.0%
	31–35 years	3	15.0%
Gender	Male	11	55.0%
	Female	9	45.9%
Education Level	Undergraduate	12	60.05
	Postgraduate	5	25.0%
	Other (Diploma/Certificate)	3	15.0%
Frequency of Online Shopping	Weekly	7	35.05
	Monthly	10	50.0%
	Occasionally	3	15.0%

Source: Field Data, 2025

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 20 young urban consumers who participated in this study. The participants were mostly between 25 and 30 years old (45%), followed by 18–24 years (40%), and a smaller proportion in the 31–35 years bracket (15%). This age distribution reflects the active young adult population that frequently engages with digital platforms, similar to findings in Uganda where young adults aged 18–30 were found to be the most active online shoppers (Okello & Mbabazi, 2021).

In terms of gender, there was a slightly higher representation of males (55%) compared to females (45%). This aligns with studies from Burundi, which reported a modest male dominance in early adoption of digital shopping platforms among urban youth (Niyonzima & Habimana, 2020).

Regarding education level, the majority of respondents were undergraduates (60%), followed by postgraduates (25%) and other diploma or certificate holders (15%). This trend supports observations in the Central African Republic, where higher educational attainment among youth was associated with greater familiarity and comfort with online shopping technologies (Bangoura & Kambale, 2019).

The frequency of online shopping showed that half of the participants shopped monthly (50%), 35% shopped weekly, and the remaining 15% engaged only occasionally. This pattern suggests that while most young urban consumers are regular users of digital platforms, only a smaller proportion engage in frequent or weekly online shopping. Comparable

trends were noted in Uganda and Burundi, where monthly online shopping was reported as the most common pattern among youth due to a combination of affordability, convenience, and access to reliable internet (Okello & Mbabazi, 2021; Niyonzima & Habimana, 2020).

Overall, the demographic profile indicates that the participants were largely young, educated, and active in digital shopping. These characteristics are important for interpreting how personal experiences, motivations, and decision-making processes influence engagement with online sellers in Gaborone.

Reliability And Validity Of Findings

The study ensured that the results for both objectives were trustworthy and dependable. Strategies such as member checking, careful transcription, and maintaining an audit trail helped confirm that the data reflected participants’ true experiences and perspectives. Table 1 below presents the reliability and validity result for each objective.

Table 1: Reliability and Validity Results for Objective one and Two

Objective	Reliability Measures	Validity Measures	Outcome
Explore how young urban consumers think through their choices when buying from digital platforms	Pretested interview questions; repeated coding checks; consistent interview procedures	Member checking; audit trail; triangulation of participant responses	Data consistently reflected participants’ reasoning and decision-making factors; interpretations were accurate and credible
Gain insight into the personal experiences, concerns, and motivations that shape engagement with online sellers and digital shopping spaces	Same as above: pretesting, repeated coding, careful transcription	Member checking; audit trail; verification of themes with participants	Data reliably captured personal experiences, motivations, and concerns; findings were trustworthy and represented participants’ perspectives accurately

Source: Field Data, 2025

Objective One: To Explore how young urban consumers in Gaborone think through their choices when buying from digital platforms.

The analysis revealed four main themes. Price sensitivity emerged as a major factor guiding purchase decisions. Participants often compared prices across multiple platforms to ensure value for money. One participant noted,

“I usually check three or four websites to see which one gives me the best price. I won’t buy if it’s too expensive.”

The second theme was product quality and authenticity. Young consumers relied on detailed product descriptions, reviews, and the reputation of sellers to assess quality. As one participant explained,

“I always read the reviews first and make sure the seller is reputable before I buy anything online.”

A third theme, convenience and accessibility, highlighted how user-friendly platforms, flexible payment options, and reliable delivery influenced decision-making. One participant said,

“If the app is easy to use and payment is quick, I am more likely to buy from it.”

Finally, social influence and peer recommendations shaped choices, particularly for new or unfamiliar products. Participants valued opinions from friends and online communities. A participant mentioned,

“I often ask my friends if they’ve used a seller before. Their opinion matters more than the ads.”

Objective Two: To Gain insight into the personal experiences, concerns, and motivations that shape how

young people in Gaborone engage with online sellers and digital shopping spaces

Four main themes were identified. The first theme, trust and security concerns, reflected participants’ caution regarding fraud, fake products, and unclear return policies. One participant shared,

“Sometimes I hesitate to buy because I’m not sure the product is real or if they will deliver on time.”

Motivation by convenience and lifestyle emerged as the second theme. Young consumers valued online shopping for its ability to save time and fit into their busy schedules. As a participant noted,

“I shop online mostly because it saves me the trip to the mall, and I can do it anytime from home.”

The third theme, emotional satisfaction, highlighted that positive experiences such as receiving expected products or finding good deals encouraged continued engagement. One participant said, “It feels good when I get a package I ordered and it’s exactly what I expected. That keeps me coming back.”

Finally, communication and interaction with sellers was important. Quick responses, clarity, and friendliness increased trust and willingness to engage. A participant explained,

“If the seller replies to my questions quickly and explains everything, I trust them more and will buy again.”

These results indicate that young urban consumers in Gaborone make online shopping decisions based on a mix of practical, social, and emotional factors, while engagement is heavily influenced by trust, convenience, and positive interaction with sellers.

Discussion Of Findings

Objective One: To Explore how young urban consumers in Gaborone think through their choices when buying from digital platforms

Objective One explored how young urban consumers in Gaborone think through their choices when buying from digital platforms. Four main themes emerged: price sensitivity, product quality and authenticity, convenience and accessibility, and social influence. These findings can be explained using the Consumer Decision-Making Theory, which posits that consumers move through a series of steps when deciding to purchase: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019) [13].

For example, participants frequently compared prices across multiple platforms, reflecting the evaluation of alternatives stage. Similarly, considerations of product quality and authenticity, including reviews and seller reputation, show that consumers actively assess options before committing to a purchase. Convenience and accessibility also influenced decisions, demonstrating that practical factors such as ease of use and delivery options affect the purchase decision stage. Social influence, as highlighted by participants consulting friends and peers, indicates that recommendations and peer feedback shape both the information search and evaluation stages of decision-making.

Furthermore, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) helps explain objective one findings, particularly the role of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use in online shopping decisions (Davis, 1989) [3]. Platforms that are user-friendly, reliable, and accessible enhance perceived ease of use, while features such as competitive pricing, quality assurance, and social recommendations increase perceived usefulness. These perceptions mutually drive participants' intention to engage with certain digital platforms over others. Prior studies from India, Pakistan, China, and Japan have reported similar patterns, showing that youth are drawn to platforms that combine usability, efficiency, and trustworthiness (Kumar & Singh, 2020; Li *et al.*, 2021; Tanaka, 2020) [6, 8, 16].

Objective Two: To Gain insight into the personal experiences, concerns, and motivations that shape how young people in Gaborone engage with online sellers and digital shopping spaces.

Objective Two focused on the personal experiences, concerns, and motivations shaping engagement with online sellers and digital shopping spaces. Four themes emerged: trust and security concerns, motivation by convenience and lifestyle, emotional satisfaction, and communication with sellers. These findings also relate strongly to TAM and Consumer Decision-Making Theory.

Trust and security concerns correspond to perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness in TAM. Participants hesitated to engage with sellers they considered untrustworthy, reflecting that perceived risks reduce the likelihood of technology adoption (Yamaguchi, 2020; Chan & Lee, 2019) [2, 18]. Motivation by convenience and lifestyle shows that participants evaluate how well online shopping fits their routines, aligning with the evaluation of alternatives and purchase decision steps in Consumer Decision-Making Theory. Emotional satisfaction from positive experiences

supports the post-purchase evaluation stage, which influences repeat engagement and brand loyalty (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019) [13].

Communication and interaction with sellers further illustrates the interplay of TAM and Consumer Decision-Making Theory. Clear, responsive, and friendly communication enhances perceived ease of use and usefulness while also supporting positive post-purchase evaluation. Studies from Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Finland, and South Korea confirm that reliable seller interactions and prompt support increase trust and engagement in online shopping (Tan, 2021; Kim & Park, 2019; Lahtinen *et al.*, 2020) [5, 7, 15].

In essence, young consumers in Gaborone navigate digital shopping using both rational evaluation and experiential cues. TAM explains how their perceptions of platform usability and usefulness guide adoption, while Consumer Decision-Making Theory illustrates the sequential steps and cognitive processes they follow when choosing, evaluating, and engaging with online products and sellers. These frameworks together provide a comprehensive understanding of both the decision-making logic and motivational factors underlying online consumer behaviour in this context.

Implications

The findings of this study have important practical, theoretical and policy implications for online retail and consumer engagement in Gaborone.

From a practical perspective, online retailers can enhance their appeal to young consumers by focusing on trust-building measures, such as clear return policies, secure payment systems, and transparent seller communication. Offering user-friendly platforms, competitive pricing, and reliable delivery services can further improve adoption and repeat engagement. Marketers should also leverage social influence, including peer recommendations and social media presence, to guide consumer decision-making and enhance credibility.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study reinforces the relevance of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Consumer Decision-Making Theory in understanding youth online behaviour in Botswana. Perceptions of ease of use, usefulness, and cognitive evaluation stages were shown to strongly influence adoption and engagement, suggesting that these frameworks can effectively explain digital consumer behaviour beyond traditional Western contexts.

For policy and digital economy development, the findings highlight the need for regulations that promote online consumer protection, including measures to reduce fraud, ensure product authenticity, and safeguard personal data. Such policies can foster trust, encourage participation in e-commerce, and support the growth of Botswana's digital marketplace.

Ultimately, this study emphasizes that addressing both practical needs and psychological factors is critical for enhancing online shopping experiences, shaping behaviour, and increasing the sustainability of digital commerce among young urban consumers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed for online retailers, marketers, and policymakers in Gaborone

1. **Enhance Trust and Security:** Online platforms should implement robust security measures, clear return policies, and transparent seller communication. Ensuring safe transactions and reliable delivery will build confidence among young consumers and encourage repeat engagement.
2. **Focus on User-Friendly Platforms:** Digital retailers should prioritize ease of navigation, fast checkout processes, and mobile-friendly designs. Simplifying the shopping experience reduces barriers to adoption and increases customer satisfaction.
3. **Leverage Social Influence:** Marketers can use peer recommendations, social media campaigns, and influencer partnerships to positively influence consumer decisions. Young urban consumers are particularly responsive to opinions from friends and online communities.
4. **Offer Competitive Pricing and Promotions:** Price-sensitive consumers benefit from regular discounts, bundle offers, and loyalty rewards. Transparent pricing and value-for-money propositions can improve purchase decisions and retention.
5. **Provide Responsive Customer Support:** Quick and clear communication from sellers strengthens engagement. Online retailers should train customer service teams to respond promptly to inquiries and concerns, enhancing trust and loyalty.
6. **Support Consumer Education and Awareness:** Policymakers and platform operators can offer guidance on safe online shopping practices, fraud prevention, and digital literacy. Educated consumers are more confident and likely to engage consistently with digital marketplaces.

Implementing these recommendations can help enhance the online shopping experience for young consumers, improve adoption of digital platforms, and support sustainable growth in Botswana's e-commerce sector.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study had a few limitations. First, the small sample size of 20 participants and the focus on young urban consumers in Gaborone limit the generalizability of the findings to other age groups or regions in Botswana. Second, the qualitative approach relied on self-reported experiences, which may be influenced by personal biases or memory recall. Third, the study concentrated only on active online shoppers, excluding individuals who do not engage digitally, which could provide additional insights into barriers to e-commerce adoption.

For future research, studies could adopt a larger, more diverse sample, including different age groups, rural populations, or other cities, to enhance generalizability. Researchers may also use mixed-methods designs to combine qualitative depth with quantitative measurement, allowing for statistical validation of trends. Finally, exploring emerging technologies, such as mobile wallets, social commerce, or AI-driven recommendation systems, could provide further understanding of factors influencing online consumer behaviour in Botswana and other African contexts.

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