



The impact of online shopping on consumers' purchasing decisions and habits among those aged 18 and over in South Wales.

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NAME- TEKLE ATOBRHAN (2210427)

[Company address]

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

Over the last twenty years, the landscape of retail has undergone a substantial transformation due to the rise of online shopping. What initially began as an alternative for digitally literate consumers during the late 1990s has steadily grown into a mainstream retail channel. Key drivers of this shift include improved internet accessibility, the proliferation of smartphones, and the continuous development of digital platforms that make online shopping more user-friendly and efficient (Sunitha and Gnanadhas, 2014).

Today, the ability to browse and purchase products at any time without being confined to physical store locations or opening hours has redefined consumer expectations. Individuals now rely heavily on features such as extensive product selections, personalised suggestions, and online customer reviews, which heavily influence buying choices (Chen et al., 2022). In the UK context, this behavioural change is visible, with South Wales showing a notable increase in digital retail adoption among residents aged 18 and over. Contributing factors include widespread mobile device usage, increased digital competence, and enhanced access to high-speed internet in the region.

In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic is one of the vital triggers for behavioural change. The introduction of national lockdowns and the temporary closure of physical retail spaces forced many consumers, especially those unfamiliar with digital shopping platforms, to turn to online alternatives out of necessity (Torkington, 2021). Alongside this, marketing through social media, influencer campaigns, and algorithm-based targeting further encouraged users to explore and adopt e-commerce more frequently.

Emerging technologies have also simplified the process of shopping online. Tools such as encrypted payment systems and automated product recommendations contribute to a seamless experience that encourages repeated use (Budiasih, 2024). As a result, buying habits among the South Wales population, particularly those aged 18 and above, have seen clear shifts in preference and behaviour. For academic researchers, business professionals, and regional authorities, examining how these localised changes are

unfolding is essential. Doing so will help uncover meaningful patterns that can guide tailored marketing, policy planning, and digital inclusion strategies (Kumo, 2023).

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite extensive global research on online shopping, regional behavioural trends in South Wales remain significantly underexplored. While the broader UK market is often treated as a single entity, such generalisation overlooks important socio-economic and cultural differences that can affect consumer behaviour. Specifically, the impact of online shopping on individuals aged 18 and over in South Wales has not received the nuanced, in-depth examination it requires.

The dominance of e-commerce has disrupted traditional shopping patterns, but little is known about how these changes are influencing everyday consumer decisions at a local level (Airen, 2024). Financial and psychological consequences such as impulsive buying, digital fatigue, and budgetary stress are globally reported (Nuradina, 2022). Yet their implications in a South Welsh context remain undocumented.

Most available data quantify shifts but fail to explore motivations and perceptions qualitatively. The absence of region-specific studies means there is a lack of insight into not just how but why consumer habits are evolving. This research addresses the critical gap by offering a focused qualitative investigation into the adult consumers of South Wales.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

This study is motivated by the need for a deeper understanding of online consumer behaviour within a clearly defined local context. From an academic perspective, it contributes to behavioural economics by introducing new qualitative data specific to a regional population. As previous research has been dominated by global trends or macro-level national data, a granular view of South Wales offers important contextual insights (Kumo, 2023).

Practically, the findings will aid local retailers and marketers in adapting their strategies to align with actual consumer behaviour. In an increasingly digital economy, South Wales-

based businesses must understand the motivations and pain points of local shoppers if they are to remain competitive (Patel, 2023).

Furthermore, individuals aged 18 and over are critical participants in the economy, responsible for many consumer decisions. Understanding this group's online shopping habits is not only commercially beneficial but also essential for promoting financial and psychological well-being (Budiasih, 2024).

1.4 Research Aim

To analyse the impact of online shopping on consumer purchasing decisions and habits among individuals aged 18 and over in South Wales.

1.5 Research Objectives

- To examine the key factors influencing consumer purchasing decisions in online shopping among individuals aged 18 and over in South Wales.
- To investigate changes in shopping habits due to the convenience and accessibility of online shopping.
- To assess the influence of online marketing, reviews, and social media on consumer purchasing decisions.
- To analyse the differences in online shopping behaviour based on demographic factors such as age, gender, and income level.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What factors influence consumer purchasing decisions in online shopping among individuals aged 18 and over in South Wales?
2. How has online shopping changed consumer shopping habits compared to traditional in-store shopping?
3. How do online promotions, reviews, and social media shape consumer purchase decisions?
4. How do demographic factors such as age, gender, and income level affect online shopping behaviour?

1.7 Hypothesis

Online shopping has a significant influence on the purchasing decisions and shopping habits of individuals aged 18 and over in South Wales. Consumers in this demographic are more likely to make impulsive purchases online than in physical stores. Additionally, online reviews and social media have a significant impact on purchasing decisions in online shopping. Convenience and accessibility are also the primary drivers of increased online shopping frequency (Chen et al., 2022; Nuradina, 2022; Torkington, 2021).

1.8 Scope of the Study

This research is limited to individuals aged 18 and over residing in South Wales. It encompasses a range of online retail sectors, including electronics, clothing, groceries, and home goods of low-value products. The study analyses how behaviour varies across age, gender, and income groups. Importantly, it focuses on psychological, financial, and behavioural aspects rather than solely quantitative measures.

International consumers and those under the age of 18 are excluded, ensuring a targeted and manageable study population. The emphasis on qualitative methodology allows for rich, contextual insights rather than broad statistical generalisations (Nayak and Narayan, 2019). This focus enables a more meaningful interpretation of behavioural motivations and barriers, critical for developing effective digital engagement strategies and business models tailored to South Wales's local consumer base (Budiasih, 2024).

1.9 Significance of the Study

The outcomes of this study have both theoretical and practical implications. For local e-commerce providers and high-street retailers, insights into consumer motivations and shopping preferences can inform targeted marketing strategies and customer service improvements. Additionally, it supports policymakers in designing inclusive digital frameworks for the region (Airen, 2024).

The study also addresses important social concerns. It contributes to understanding how online environments influence impulsive buying and financial stress (Nuradina, 2022; Holkar and Lees, 2020). Academically, the research enhances regional consumer

literature and bridges the gap between national data and local experience, offering a more accurate lens into the South Wales digital economy.

1.10 Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 provides a critical review of literature related to online shopping behaviour and external influences. Chapter 3 outlines the qualitative methodology used for data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 presents findings using thematic analysis. Chapter 5 offers an interpretation and discussion of results in light of the literature. Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation, presenting practical recommendations for retailers and suggestions for future academic research in the context of regional consumer behaviour.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to critically examine existing academic research and industry data relevant to the impact of online shopping on consumer purchasing decisions and habits among individuals aged 18 and over in South Wales. It aims to identify and analyse the key behavioural shifts associated with the rise of e-commerce, particularly considering the growing reliance on digital platforms for everyday transactions. Consumer purchasing behaviour has become increasingly influenced by technological developments, including mobile shopping, personalisation, and digital marketing, making it essential to explore how these factors specifically affect the South Wales population.

This review directly supports the research aim and objectives by offering a structured analysis of existing theories and findings that relate to decision-making, shopping frequency, psychological drivers, and demographic influences. It also informs the research questions by identifying gaps in the literature, especially the lack of regional focus on adult consumers in South Wales.

The chapter is structured thematically, beginning with the evolution of online shopping, followed by critical factors affecting purchase decisions, the role of social media, changes

in shopping habits, psychological and financial effects, demographic variation, and the consequences for traditional retail. Data from GWP Group (2022) and Ologunbe et al. (2024) support the relevance and timeliness of this investigation.

2.2 Evolution and Adoption of Online Shopping Behaviour

The evolution from traditional in-store purchasing to online shopping marks a significant transformation in modern consumer behaviour. Initially viewed as a niche alternative in the late 1990s and early 2000s, e-commerce has since emerged as a dominant retail force, reshaping global shopping practices. Sunitha and Gnanadhas (2014) note that early developments in online retail were largely driven by increased access to the internet and the introduction of secure online payment systems, which helped to build consumer trust in digital transactions. Subsequent advances in mobile technology, digital wallets, and app-based platforms further contributed to widespread consumer adoption.

In the UK, adult consumers across all age brackets have increasingly turned to online shopping for both essential and non-essential purchases. Humphries (2019) highlights how online usage has grown across multiple demographics, including the over-65 population, signalling broad digital inclusion. In South Wales, regional trends also show significant increases in digital access and mobile commerce, with improved broadband infrastructure playing a central role in driving consumer connectivity (Centre for Cities, 2023). This expansion has enabled adults aged 18 and over to engage more confidently with e-commerce platforms.

The COVID-19 pandemic served as a major catalyst in accelerating this behavioural shift. According to Croudace (2022), the temporary closure of physical shops and safety concerns around in-person shopping prompted many individuals to rely heavily on online channels. Budiasih (2024) adds that this acceleration occurred alongside a growing awareness of digital convenience and cost management, with consumers seeking control and efficiency in uncertain times.

These changes in adoption patterns are also reflected in consumer decision-making models. As Kumo (2023) explains, digital environments have reshaped how consumers process information, assess alternatives, and finalise purchases. Online platforms now

influence not just where consumers shop, but how they evaluate and act on their purchasing choices.

2.3 Factors Influencing Online Consumer Purchasing Decisions

What affects online consumer shopping involves technology, the mind and society all working together in different ways. How well a website is designed, its user-friendliness, suitability on mobile screens, and the clarity of its product information all play a significant role. Fachmi and his colleagues (2019) say that how a website works is significant for building customer trust and making it easy to use. Terrible app design or sluggish mobile websites tend to deter younger adults from completing a purchase, as they rely heavily on smartphones.

Having many online reviews and ratings also helps. By analysing eye movements, Chen et al. (2022) conclude that viewing reviews written by others helps consumers make purchasing decisions. Before buying, people now use other reviews and experiences to assess a product's quality, reliability, and overall satisfaction. This aligns with the concept of social proof, which suggests that observing others' actions helps people feel more secure when making online purchases (Rachmiani et al., 2024).

Personalisation is also important, such as relying on recommender systems and advertisements tailored to individuals based on their online records. This feature in e-commerce simplifies product finding and recommends products that users like, encouraging them to stay longer on the website (Kumo, 2023). People use such technologies because they want to be efficient and because they feel attracted by feelings such as pleasure, excitement or interest in the new.

Being able to shop anytime and anywhere is a significant reason why people use online stores. In her study, Nuradina (2022) noted that working adults and parents prefer online shopping due to its convenience, home delivery, and ease of ordering, which leads to increased order frequency and quantity. Social influence also plays a significant role because people often form their opinions about brands or platforms based on the opinions of their friends, influencers, and popular online communities.

However, trust is still essential for this to work. Concerns over cyber safety, data privacy, and dishonest buying can still deter customers, even if the advertisement is highly appealing. Griffith et al. (2009) emphasise that how risky a consumer perceives digital commerce to be will determine whether they are willing to make online transactions. Strong confidence in the safety of the company's platform, its return policy and support for customers helps people stay loyal for a long time.

In general, a person's decision to buy something online is influenced by interface design, peer input, support from algorithms, the appeal of the product, and how risky they perceive the option to be, all at the same time.

2.4 Impact of Social Media, Online Marketing, and Digital Influencers

Social media and digital marketing are significantly influencing people's purchasing decisions in the online shopping sector. Looking at what people are viewing in real-time, allowing Facebook, Instagram and TikTok to personalise ads is one of the main ways these platforms get things personal for users. Kumo (2023) states that showing users customised content increases the chance they will interact with the brand and make a purchase.

Younger adults are strongly influenced by what others say on social media and by the endorsement of celebrities. In her research (Nuradina, 2022), it was noted that seeing a famous or similar person endorse a brand helps make it more reliable and appealing, encouraging people to make a purchase immediately. The argument is further supported by Haupt (2022), who maintains that product videos and stylish decorations can ignite buying emotions by making people want what they see, fuelling a feeling of impatience, or boosting their desire to be like what is featured.

Now, shoppers can buy products directly inside Instagram or TikTok, and live streams on Facebook Marketplace make it easy to share on the viewer's social pages. Chen et al. (2022) mention that including such features helps by smoothing the buyer's path and boosting people's behavioural influence through likes, shares and comments.

Being approved by others psychologically has a significant impact on our actions. Many people often check what others are buying when they purchase something unfamiliar or

with numerous options. In Vollero et al.'s view (2023), this gives rise to an emotional connection that impacts how much users trust a product and how important it is to them.

In South Wales, local aspects are now more prevalent when businesses engage in digital marketing. As mentioned by Torkington (2021), due to altered behaviour after the pandemic in the UK, marketing has begun to focus more on regional areas and consumers who increased their online presence during COVID-19 restrictions. Because South Wales has a large adult population, geo-targeting influencer campaigns are very important, as most now expect social activity and online shopping to go hand in hand.

2.5 Changes in Consumer Shopping Habits Due to Online Platforms

The expansion of online platforms has significantly altered consumer shopping habits, prompting a shift from pre-planned, in-store purchases to more impulsive, spontaneous transactions. Torkington (2021) observes that the convenience and immediacy of digital platforms have enabled consumers to shop in a reactive rather than deliberative manner, often influenced by limited time offers or algorithmic prompts.

A notable consequence of this shift is the erosion of traditional brand loyalty. The COVID-19 pandemic forced consumers to explore unfamiliar brands due to supply disruptions, delivery delays, or stock shortages. According to Das, Sarkar and Debroy (2022), this led to increased experimentation and a decline in longstanding brand preferences, as availability, price, and delivery speed began to outweigh brand identity in the consumer decision hierarchy.

The rise of mobile commerce (m-commerce) has further influenced behavioural patterns. Consumers now routinely switch between platforms such as Amazon, eBay, and brand-specific apps in search of better deals, faster delivery, or exclusive mobile-only offers. Patel (2023) highlights how this increased fluidity has given rise to what is known as the 'Amazon effect'—a preference for speed, simplicity, and comprehensive service that other retailers must now match to retain relevance.

In South Wales, the impact of COVID-19 on shopping habits has been particularly pronounced. Data from the Centre for Cities (2023) indicates a permanent decline in footfall across traditional high streets, even as restrictions lifted. This suggests a long-

term behavioural pivot towards digital shopping channels among adults in the region. Consumers increasingly prioritise speed and convenience, with loyalty becoming more transactional and conditional.

However, price sensitivity continues to shape purchasing behaviour. Vollero et al. (2023) note that while consumers enjoy convenience, many remain cautious about spending, particularly in areas experiencing economic pressure. Sweney (2019) adds that older consumers, once reluctant to shop online, have now adopted digital behaviours, further broadening the shift across age groups.

Overall, digital platforms have redefined how, when, and why consumers shop, leading to more fragmented loyalty patterns, increased reliance on mobile devices, and a strong emphasis on ease and affordability trends clearly visible in the South Wales context.

2.6 Psychological and Financial Impacts of Online Shopping

Increasingly, it is recognised that how online shopping affects people's minds and wallets is crucial for understanding consumer behaviour, as we rely on digital technologies more today. Hedonic motivation has been linked to impulsive buying, which is a primary concern. In Nuradina's opinion (2022), being able to shop at any time, seeing numerous ads, and having fun using apps make people enjoy shopping more, often on impulse. Digital platforms are made to please users, which might cause people to become addicted in the long run.

As a result, many people face financial difficulties, particularly those with limited budgeting control. According to Holkar and Lees (2020), such platforms can lead people to spend more, which may cause them to feel regretful and guilty and have less control over their finances. As a result, such pressure is more noticeable in areas of economic diversity, such as South Wales, where living costs are increasing but income growth is not keeping pace. According to Budiasih (2024), the increasing complexity of digital financial management requires consumers to be more aware so that they do not experience ongoing stress.

Having too many choices puts a mental strain on the buyer. According to Haupt (2022), when consumers are presented with a vast number of products, offers, and personalised

choices, they may become tired and struggle to make decisions. By using features such as countdown timers, the phrase “almost out” on products, and one-day offers, stores encourage shoppers to take immediate action rather than think (Ologunbe et al., 2024).

Pressures on supply chains have intensified since the pandemic ended. Das, Sarkar and Debroy (2022) state that, due to being forced online during lockdowns, people have become tired of using online services. Being constantly reminded online by marketplaces, notifications, and custom content has caused some people to become less involved or to start avoiding these things.

For many adults in South Wales, this group of emotional, financial and digital problems is hard to manage. Advertising influences your choices and impacts overall consumer happiness, which is another reason we should consider both psychological strength and digital knowledge when shopping online.

2.7 Influence of Demographics on Online Shopping Behaviour

Online shopping behaviour is strongly influenced by a person’s age, gender, income, and location. The differences among citizens aged 18 and over in South Wales often stand out, as factors such as digital access, financial situation, and experience with technology vary significantly.

Ageing plays a significant part in how people see themselves. Individuals aged 18 to 30 typically have a good grasp of technology and can adapt to new things, which encourages them to use mobile apps, digital wallets, and products recommended by algorithms. Older consumers, those aged 60 or older, often face difficulties in understanding and trusting online sites (Sweney, 2019). Even so, an increasing number of people in this age group are now utilising digital services, particularly after the pandemic, with most of their purchases being handled online (Humphries, 2019).

People’s decisions about products are influenced by gender. According to Das, Sarkar, and Debroy (2022), it is evident that men are more interested in electronics and technology, whereas women tend to focus on clothing, beauty, and household items. There are also motivational differences—some people care mainly about the utility and

need of a product. In contrast, others are motivated by how they feel or what they believe the product represents.

How much money someone earns can change their shopping habits, such as which brands they like, when they buy, and their price concerns. According to Pagare (2024), individuals who earn less tend to search for deals and utilise platforms that offer flexible payment options or more affordable services.

The countryside difference in South Wales makes it harder for some people to access digital services. Neighbourhoods in cities tend to have good internet, but communities in rural regions are often denied good connectivity due to a lack of basic infrastructure. Nayak and Narayan (2019) note that people's digital literacy skills vary significantly across regions, and some communities require additional guidance to manage online platforms safely and effectively.

These aspects, together, determine when and why consumers shop using e-commerce in South Wales.

2.8 Impact on Traditional Retail and Consumer Expectations

The expansion of online shopping has significantly disrupted traditional retail, leading to a visible decline in footfall across physical stores. Patel (2023) notes that many brick-and-mortar businesses have struggled to compete with the speed, convenience, and pricing flexibility of digital platforms. This shift has altered consumer expectations, particularly around fast delivery, personalised service, and 24/7 availability. In response, many retailers have adopted hybrid models such as click-and-collect to bridge the gap between physical and online shopping experiences.

In South Wales, high streets have faced increasing pressure to adapt or risk obsolescence. Local retailers are now expected to match digital standards while maintaining in-person customer service. Pagare (2024) argues that this transition is not merely logistical but cultural, as consumers now associate value with convenience and accessibility. Vollero et al. (2023) describe this as the "Amazon effect," whereby high service standards and frictionless transactions are becoming the baseline for retail success.

2.9 Gaps in Existing Literature and Need for Localised Research

While existing literature has extensively examined online consumer behaviour on national and global scales, there remains a lack of research that focuses specifically on regional patterns, particularly in South Wales. Much of the current work overlooks semi-rural communities and fails to account for local infrastructure, economic conditions, and access disparities. Das, Sarkar and Debroy (2022) highlight the importance of contextualising consumer habits, yet few studies explore the nuanced behaviours of smaller populations.

Moreover, emotional and psychological factors such as impulsivity, financial stress, and digital fatigue are often quantified rather than explored through in-depth qualitative analysis. Holkar and Lees (2020) argue for more attention to individual experiences, especially under economic pressure. Pagare (2024) further notes that consumer behaviour is increasingly shaped by localised digital integration, which broad studies fail to capture. Croudace (2022) supports the need for region-specific analysis post-COVID. This dissertation directly addresses these gaps by focusing on adults aged 18 and over in South Wales.

2.10 Summary of Literature Review

This chapter has explored the main factors affecting online consumer behaviour, including shifts in purchasing habits, emotional and psychological drivers, demographic influences, and changing expectations of retail experiences. The review highlighted the limited availability of region-specific literature focused on South Wales, particularly in relation to financial pressures, digital fatigue, and behavioural motivations. These gaps underline the importance of a localised approach to understanding online shopping patterns. The chapter also established the need for qualitative research to capture real-world decision-making processes. The following chapter will present the methodology used to investigate these gaps and support the study's aims and objectives.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction to Methodology

This chapter presents the research framework designed to examine how online shopping affects consumer decision-making and behavioural patterns among people aged 18 and over in South Wales. Choosing the right methods is essential to ensure the research questions and aims are met in a trustworthy and appropriate way. Since the study explores underlying motivations, emotional responses, and region-specific trends, a qualitative approach rooted in interpretivist thinking has been selected (Pervin and Mokhtar, 2022). This approach supports the capture of rich, first-hand accounts that mirror actual shopping behaviours. The chapter goes on to explain the philosophical foundation of the study, the process for selecting participants, the tools used to collect information, and the way the responses will be examined. Ethical safeguards and limitations of the chosen methods are also discussed to provide a complete view of the research design.

3.2 Research Philosophy and Approach

Since consumer behaviour is complex, influenced by its context, and involves individual beliefs, the study employs an interpretive approach (Yao et al., 2024). Instead of focusing on set laws, interpretivism lets a researcher focus on what drives individuals, which is useful when exploring changes in behaviour in a particular area. It enables the researcher to understand how buyers in South Wales perceive convenience, trust, and influence when making an online purchase. The study also employs an inductive approach to reasoning. No pre-existing theories limit the collection of patterns and insights which are found in participant answers. Using an inductive strategy allows us to study how people purchase items locally and gain insights guided by their experiences, which is ideal for behavioural research (Pervin and Mokhtar, 2022).

3.3 Research Design and Strategy

The researchers decided that a qualitative design would best explain the personal, emotional and social experiences of online shopping (Santhosh, 2022). Notably, the study

employs open-ended questions in semi-structured questionnaires. People can share their views more clearly, and the researcher can investigate how individuals answer the questions. Using a quantitative approach is avoided because the questions explore both what consumers do and why they do it. With qualitative research, emotions, perceived risks, and personal likes and dislikes can naturally emerge in the results. Adults in South Wales who differ in their technological skills, internet usage frequency, and product choices can be well captured using this method (Roy and Datta, 2023). Due to the design, it is easy to alter findings while analysing the data rather than being bound by limited and rigid groupings.

3.4 Sampling Method and Target Population

The population of interest includes individuals aged 18 and above who reside in South Wales and engage in online shopping. Given the specificity of this demographic, purposive sampling was adopted to select participants who could provide relevant and meaningful insights. Unlike probability sampling, purposive sampling ensures the researcher can include individuals who meet pre-set criteria: age, residence, and online shopping activity (Kaur et al., 2024). The goal was not to generalise findings to the entire population, but to gather deep insights from those with direct experience. Efforts were made to include a diverse range of participants in terms of age brackets (e.g., 18–23, 24–30, 31–37, 38–45, 45+), gender, and income levels to reflect varying motivations and behaviours. A target sample size of 15 to 20 individuals was identified as sufficient for thematic saturation—i.e., the point at which additional data no longer reveal new patterns. This size is suitable for qualitative analysis without compromising depth.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

This study gathered original data using online questionnaires made up of open-ended questions aimed at drawing out detailed and thoughtful responses. Choosing a digital method matched the subject matter of online shopping behaviour and ensured participants could take part easily and comfortably. These questionnaires were shared through Facebook community groups, local contact networks, and email invitations. The questions explored multiple aspects, such as how often participants shop online, their views on its advantages and downsides, and how much they trust online platforms

(Pavlou and Gefen, 2004). They were also asked about the effect of product reviews and social media (Lin and Xu, 2017; Zhang et al., 2014), and how online shopping made them feel emotionally. To capture any shifts in habits, participants were encouraged to reflect on how their behaviour changed since the COVID-19 pandemic (Roy and Datta, 2023). Care was taken to keep the questions neutral and open so participants could respond honestly. This format gave individuals time to consider their answers and allowed people from different parts of South Wales, including both city and rural areas, to be part of the study, enriching the overall diversity of views.

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

Analysis of the responses involved thematic analysis, which is best suited for identifying patterns among a group of qualitative data (Santhosh, 2022). First, the data were studied, initial codes were created, themes were identified, reviewed, and given names, and finally, a meaningful interpretation was developed in agreement with the study's aims. Coding was done manually, which allowed the researcher to notice the details of what the participants said. Doing things manually allowed the chosen themes to reflect what the participants shared rather than being imposed incorrectly. The findings were organised according to the goals: why people shop online, what impacts emotions and behaviour, how technology has changed, and the demographics involved. By using this method, insights emerged from the expected subject areas as well as from unexpected sources, such as personal stories or concerns specific to the area. The vulnerability of thematic analysis allowed us to discover both the typical actions of consumers and what sets each one apart, which fitted the research's exploratory approach.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered strictly to ethical research principles. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and provided with a digital consent form outlining their rights, including voluntary participation and withdrawal at any time. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed; no personal identifiers were collected. Responses were stored securely and used exclusively for academic purposes. Ethical approval was obtained from the university's research guidelines. Given the nature of the topic, care was taken to avoid intrusive questions, and the tone of the questionnaire remained neutral and respectful.

Participants were also informed that no commercial or institutional use would be made of the data.

3.8 Limitations of the Methodology

Although the selected methodology is suitable for examining consumer behaviour in a detailed and context-specific way, there are certain constraints that must be acknowledged. The number of participants, while sufficient for identifying themes through qualitative analysis, does not allow the findings to be extended to the broader population. Because the study relies on participants' accounts, the responses may reflect personal biases, social desirability, or gaps in memory (Khan et al., 2015). Another limitation relates to the format of data collection: using online questionnaires may unintentionally exclude those with lower levels of digital competence, which could result in a sample that overrepresents tech-savvy users. Nonetheless, the approach taken in this study remains valid for understanding personal motivations and behaviours in a defined, local adult population (Khanh and Gim, 2014).

3.9 Summary

This chapter details the research approach used to examine how online shopping influences the decisions and routines of adults in South Wales. A qualitative and interpretive framework was chosen to explore both behaviour and thought processes associated with digital purchasing. By using purposive sampling and open-ended questionnaires, the study captured rich, context-specific data from individuals directly engaged in online retail. Thematic analysis made it possible to uncover shared patterns and deeper insights. Throughout the study, ethical standards were strictly followed. While the research design is not without limitations, it remains well-matched to the specific goals and scope of the project. The next chapter will present and interpret the findings drawn from participants' responses.

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

The chapter also reports the outcome and conclusions of the research that were as a result of a close thematic itemisation of research data that was obtained when the participants were asked to complete semi-structured and open-ended survey questionnaires. The study aimed at examining how online shopping influenced the buying decisions and behaviour patterns of people of 18 years and above who reside within the South Wales region (Ologunbe et al., 2024). As digital retail is rapidly expanding and the population relies more on online shopping sources to fulfil the needs and wants, both the necessary and the incidental level, of their existence, a desire to capture the individual experiences, motivations, challenges, and habits of adult consumers in the given regional context was identified (Ologunbe et al., 2024; Okrent et al., 2022). Through directing research participants to think critically about themselves, by soliciting self-revealing answers, rather than invalidating closed-ended questionnaires, the study attempted to identify the more hidden, hence more immeasurable aspects of consumer cognition and sentiment, which trigger online purchasing behaviour (Olumekor et al., 2022; Okrent et al., 2022).

The proposed research draws on the foundations of the interpretivist paradigm, as subjectivity and the construction of meaning were deemed the priorities because market research should take into consideration sales behaviour, which is driven by personal values, context, and perception (Olumekor et al., 2022). The study did not aim to seek the generalisation of the results into a larger population but to use the richness and diversity of lived experience by those who are involved in active online shopping (Olumekor et al., 2022; Nuradina, 2022). Such a philosophical inclination allowed the researcher to take into account the interpretation of customers about the notion of convenience, trust, satisfaction, impulsiveness, and social influence in the digital retailing environment. Since it is not only the process of shopping but also a socially situated and

psychologically motivated course of action, the qualitative approach gave the opportunity to gain a deeper insight into these individual processes (Olumekor et al., 2022; Nuradina, 2022).

In the analytical process, the responses the participants offered were manually coded with the help of which the original senses and nuances of the language these people used were retained (Olumekor et al., 2022). Thematic analysis was selected due to flexibility and the capacity to bring out similarities and differences of opinions. Key codes identified, after being grouped and synthesised into major themes, matched research objectives identified in Chapter 1 as a result of a repetitive reading and re-reading of the data (Padhiary et al., 2025).

This procedure helped to make sure that the stated themes were closely associated with the data and not imposed. The inability to explore the analysis using automatised tools allowed the researcher to interact more personally with the stories of participants that created a more natural and realistic view of the result (Padhiary et al., 2025; Nuradina, 2022).

By doing so, such a strategy will not only enable the research at hand to convey fresh empirical findings but also to relate them to general theoretical discourses (Padhiary et al., 2025). Alongside the chapter are direct quotes by the participators to give their experiences voices and to provide the analysis with the clear bottom of the issues that matters instead of allowing the work to become too conceptual and abstract to the reality of those who made participation in the study (Patel, 2023; Mashilo et al., 2025).

Overview of Data collection and Profile of participants

The research involved a total of seventeen participants who took part in an online, semi-structured, open-ended interview, which was put together to facilitate the study of the dynamics of behaviour and decision-making processes, related to the sphere of online shopping (Patel, 2023). To come up with the sample, a purposive sampling technique was employed, guaranteeing that the sampling of the respondents was done on the existing criterion: the subjects must be aged 18 and above, be located in South Wales, and have been personally active in online shopping (Lusk et al., 2021). The sampling

procedure was perfectly suited to a qualitative approach, especially an interpretivist one, because it was possible to choose participants intentionally to provide deep and context-sensitive knowledge on digital consumer behaviour (Patel, 2023; Mahmudi, 2024). The geographical focus on the South Wales region has allowed the research study to analyse how not only general behavioural tendencies can also be studied, but also regional differences that could impact the online shopping behaviour, including the accessibility to digital technology, the nature of local infrastructure and the economic differentiator (Patel, 2023).

The age structure of the respondents was even cross-sectional of the aged population. The participants in the visual data divided into two biggest groups as those who were aged between 31-40 and 41-50 accounted to 25 percent of the sample each. The proportion of those between the age of 18 to 23 and 25 to 30 reduced to 20 and 17.5 percent, respectively, and they were joined by the people aged 50 years and above with 12.5 percent (Patel, 2023; Lusk et al., 2021). This distribution made it possible to analyse comparatively within the age groups, which gave a better idea about the role of the generational differences in such aspects of it like the digital fluency level, the way of motivation in relation to the shopping, and the kind of trust to the online platforms. The variability in age ranges contributed towards the study capability of finding the patterns regarding technology acceptance and emotional motivators on consumer behaviour within a post-pandemic digital economy in particular (Patel, 2023).

The frequency of shopping places showed a variety of involvement levels with online retailing sites by the participants. Most of them reported doing it weekly or monthly, therefore approximately 36 percent of the sample in each category, which means that online shopping is now an addition to and recurrent feature of their consumption patterns. A fifth (15 percent) stated that they did seasonal shopping which could often occur at roundups such as holidays or during sales and a little less proportion (10 percent) made daily online purchases and were mostly of small and recur metric nature (Patel, 2023). These trends indicate on the rise of the normalisation of internet-based shopping as the major scheme of purchasing. They also conform to the literature that stresses on the use

of digital convenience, particularly throughout and post the COVID-19 pandemic, to sustain the behavioural changes of consumers (Patel, 2023).

Other participants were also able to share about the products areas they made most of the purchases and the aspect that may have influenced their purchase decisions. Going by the data, the dominant category had clothing and accessories (over 60%), electronics and gadgets, groceries and household items and health and beauty products (Patel, 2023). These inclinations indicate that necessities as well as lifestyle commodities are more being bought via internet. Regarding the factors that may affect the decisions, the participants mentioned the price and discounts as the main influence (more than 80 percent), with convenience and delivery velocity coming second (Patel, 2023). There was also the mention of product reviews and social media as having a smaller influence. Such reactions promote the value of practical factors like affordability and effectiveness in addition to digital-based trust stimuli like peer reviews and content marketing in the formation of consumer decisions within the area in South Wales (Patel, 2023).

Key Themes and Findings

The major point that came about throughout the responses of the participants was the predominance of convenience and accessibility in driving online shopping behaviour. Multiple participants stated that one of the advantages of digital platforms was the possibility of shopping at any time and under conditions when ordinary stores are closed (Patel, 2023). This suited people with busy jobs or personal matters very well, including shift workers, those with caregiving duties, and parents. The time when the purchasing was possible was late at night, when they were in the workplace, so they could make purchases without interrupting their work schedule (Qalati et al., 2021). One of the participants emphasised that: "I do work shifts and find it impossible to visit a shop at a normal time of day. I have found shopping online to be adjustable to my schedule." Such flexibility was not only termed as luxury, but as a need that enabled participants to balance their personal and professional life (Qalati et al., 2021).

Besides time flexibility, the respondents also considered the possibility of searching and comparing a diversity of products very easily. This was a feature of online shopping that

was prevalent among those customers who desired efficiency and had control over the goods buying decisions (Qalati et al., 2021). Customer reviews, the possibility to compare the prices on various platforms, and the experience of filtering several search results to the individual preferences gave the feeling of power. The respondents were pleased with the opportunity to find particular products in the shortest possible time, other than visit these huge physical stores or wait to be attended to by sales representatives (Qalati et al., 2021). To consumers located in the rural areas in South Wales or with mobility problems, the ease of access provided by e-commerce was even more vital. It facilitated one to engage in retail activities, which would otherwise have been limited owing to transport, health, or geographic constraints. So, to a good share of respondents, online shopping did not simply occur as a means of convenience but rather as the process of inclusion (Rachmiani et al., 2024).

These results provide a firm backing of the study conducted by Nuradina (2022) who pointed out that convenience is among the factors having the greatest impact in engaging consumers in online retail. Nuradina states that this withdrawal of the barrier between space and time is especially important to those consumers who have little time or geographical flexibility which is expressed similarly by the people in this study. Moreover, it could also be seen that the consumer expectations were well represented by the phenomenon of the Amazon effect outlined by Vollero et al. (2023). The respondents cited the convenience of next day delivery, the ease of check-out and ease of returns as commodities they expected to be normal. Retailers not so performing to these expectations did not fare so well no matter the price or brand name. This trend indicates that the sense of convenience has changed as it is no longer measured on the criteria of ease of access, it is now measured in speed, simplicity, as well as in the effectiveness of services (Rachmiani et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, even though the number of upsides was remarkable, some of the responders admitted the fact that the comfort of online shopping occasionally created some unintentional results. Some of them even said that the plentitude of choices they have online is overwhelming, and one respondent added that they cannot choose because of excess choice paralysis. The wide variety of products and offers sometimes

complicated rather than simplified the process of making choices by customers and limited the time they were able to spend on shopping (Rachmiani et al., 2024). Moreover, the convenience of use and the persuasive format of the digital platforms promoted more browsing that in certain instances brought to impulsive purchases and the feeling of buyer sincere remorse. Respondents also confessed that they sometimes purchased something unexpected just because it became that easy to do so. These considerations raise one of the paradoxical aspects in the theme on convenience, that though it eases access and boosts independence, it can also lead to the overconsumption of goods and services, decision fatigue, and the loss of willful decision-making in consumer behaviour (Rachmiani et al., 2024).

Emotional and Impulsive Buying Behaviour

The other principal theme which was identified among the data was the emotional-mental aspect of online shopping, especially how individuals are prone to make impulsive purchases driven by emotions, the surrounding context or online cues. In most cases, the participants explained that they were affected when they are in an emotional state, like being bored, stressed, excited, or even tired, which affects their purchasing (Singh, 2024). This was due to the ease and constant availability of sites on the internet and consumers were therefore able to react to the feelings in almost real time without any specific forethought. The majority of participants have confessed about browsing when they have no purpose, mostly in the evening or late at night and it also resulted in unintended shopping (Singh, 2024). This concurs with the growing understanding of the consumer behaviour literature that shopping is not always and most certainly a matter of rationality, but more of an affair full of affective connotations. This propensity to make emotionally arousing, spontaneous purchases would seem to be enhanced by the visually stimulating and frictionless retail environment that digital selling environments are intended to provide (Singh, 2024).

Some even said that online shopping was their form of escape or even a way to reward themselves emotionally. Indeed, one of the participants stated the following: "I buy when I feel low or bored, it makes me temporarily feel good." Other people developed the habit of scrolling through the online shops, usually when they have nothing to do or some

content to watch on the television set (Singh, 2024). Here, we may interpret online shopping as a functional need and emotional need of not just any person since it gives one a feeling of control, something new, or even comfort (Singh, 2024). This emotional effect can be further boosted by the gamification of online stores, that is, the use of hints, flash sales, limited-time offers, and personalised discounts to create a more psychologically rewarding and engaging shopping process. These findings are consistent with the findings of Lusk and McFadden (2021) in individuals purchasing online, as hedonic dispositions are found to be significant to the occurrence of online impulse buying, especially in younger consumers and tech-oriented customers who spend longer periods on technological platforms (Singh, 2024).

Even though there were such pinches of dissatisfaction, many participants considered emotional and impulsive shopping as a normal aspect of their online life, not an issue to be shunned. This contradiction is noteworthy because it demonstrates that modern consumer identity is quite complicated and complex, as it incorporates rational and emotional consumption. Although the real-world economic models represent impulsive buying as something irrational or negative, the subjects of this experiment used to refer to it as a treat or a reward, a temporary pleasure, or satisfaction (Sarkar et al., 2024). Nevertheless, some of the participants who had a narrower leeway reported that they experienced either post-impulse-buy financial stress or the temptation to restrict their spending in the following months. It replicates the conclusions of Das et al. (2022), who note the long-term effects of online consumerism on mental and financial health in diverse economies (see the table below). Combined, the facts indicate that although internet purchasing might be an emotion-filling experience, it may also result in the appearance of behavioural patterns that should be restricted by self-conscious control (Sarkar et al., 2024).

Trust and Risk Perception

Trust was seen to be one of the most important things affecting online shopping behaviour. The participants had more trust in established services such as Amazon or Tesco, claiming they valued secure methods of payment, easy conditions of returns, and services that do not change (Sarkar et al., 2024). Some just wanted to be safe when

transacting and hence use mediators like PayPal. Previous bad experiences, e.g. scams, non-delivery or being cheated by a bad quality product, influenced people long-term and in many cases, people simply could not be bothered with shopping at unknown retailers (Simanjuntak et al., 2024).

The participants also wrote about taking a risk of going shopping online with risks of receiving low-quality products, the issues with their privacy, or the unworthy customer service. Although they were able to overcome these risks by consulting reviews and buyer protections in digitally competent users, in other users, especially older or less technically minded participants, the concern was more sceptical. To others, this amounted to reservations, and they were reluctant to engage in new platforms (Simanjuntak et al., 2024).

Interestingly, most of the respondents recognised a convenience/ risk trade. They were most times willing to take partial risk of reduced prices or speed of delivery, so marketing schemes like researching the seller or secure payment could be used. These results coincide with research by Soleimani (2022) and Qalati et al. (2021), who cite trust and management of risk as the key factors in the decision to purchase online. Generally, consumers in the online shopping environment in South Wales do not rely on trust, but they take it into their own hands (Simanjuntak et al., 2024).

online influence and social media

The importance of social media, digital marketing, and peer-generated content in affecting their online shopping behaviours was greatly recognised by the participants. Social networks such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook contributed to the formation of product discovery and purchase intention to a great extent (Simanjuntak et al., 2024). Especially younger participants stated that being exposed to endorsement and incorporation by influencers made them more trusting and interested in the product they had not shown interest in before. Said one of the participants: “When I see it recommended by someone I follow on Instagram, I am much more likely to believe it.”

Reviews online were also mentioned as influential decision-making tools. According to many respondents, they used to check ratings and read about feedback of customers

before they decided to buy something; some of them even gave precedence to customers' reviews of peer description over product description (Simanjuntak et al., 2024). Such a behaviour is in line with the theory of social proof, which assumes that the idea of popularity, as well as approval of other people, contributes to the validation of a choice (Soleimani, 2022).

Moreover, the participants mentioned targeted advertising and customised information as a source of spontaneous interest, whereas the platform was tracking their browsing patterns excessively close, which made some of the respondents feel uncomfortable. Nevertheless, most people living with this became accustomed to such kind of marketing as an attribute of online shopping (Soleimani, 2022).

The findings support previous studies advanced by Van Quaquebeke et al. (2022) and Kumo (2023). According to these authors, the social and algorithmic influence can largely impact consumer decisions because digital natives, who masterfully combine digital shopping and social media consumption, make them (Soleimani, 2022).

Demographic Differences in Online Shopping Behaviour

Age, level of income and location were some of the main demographic variables that showed major influence on online retail activities practiced by the participants. Respondents of 18-30 age bands showed themselves very digitally fluent, and they relied frequently on mobile applications, AI-generated proposals, and digital wallets to transact in a swift manner. They were also more inclined to spending impulsively and consuming the work of influencers on such websites as Instagram and Tik Tok. Conversely, response to older participants (especially, aged 50+) was more inclined to desktop browsing, more explicit navigation as well as more conservative buying behaviour, and in many cases they prioritise security and reviews (Soleimani, 2022).

The level of income was also the factor. Participants with lower income were of particular concern to price-wise shoppers; they actively seek discounts, lending opportunities, and more cost-effective services. Some said that they postpone their purchases or use sales to be able to spend on something. In the meantime, convenience, the speed of delivery,

and the quality of products were valued more highly by the respondents with high incomes (Song et al., 2023).

The geographic location also contributed to behaviour. The urban respondents were more fortunate in having easier access to high-speed internet and fast delivery services, whereas the rural ones encountered certain problems like slower shipping or unreliable connections, which sometimes restricted their use of the internet (Song et al., 2023).

These observations are in line with the works of Das et al. (2022) and Chen et al. (2022) indicating that digital accessibility and income gaps; as well as comfortability with technology abiding by different age groups are crucial factors in determining the level of interaction between various groups with e-commerce platforms (Song et al., 2023).

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion, Limitations and Recommendations

Conclusion

The last chapter gives the conclusions the study had made, and recommendations based on the results from both an academic and a practical point of view (Song et al., 2023). The study examined the effects of online shopping on the decisions and behaviour of people aged 18 and above in South Wales by adopting a qualitative study by the latest interpretive software (Song et al., 2023). By using a thematic analysis approach to the responses given to open-ended questions in questionnaires, the study extracted major items that influence online consumer behaviour, such as convenience, emotional influence, trust and exposure to social media and demographic differences (Song et al., 2023). This chapter reiterates the research objectives, provides an outline of the major findings, and offers recommendations to businesses, policymakers, and researchers who will conduct research in the future (Song et al., 2023).

6Appendices

Resum of Central Finding

The paper has shown that ease and accessibility rank at the top in making decisions to shop online. Members always included the availability of flexibility to shop at their own convenience, including anyone with a busy work schedule, travel problems, or minimal access to brick-and-mortar stores (Song et al., 2023). Nevertheless, some respondents claimed that the abundance of choice and the overexposure to the marketing process might result in decision fatigue and impulsive purchase (Song et al., 2023).

The second key finding was the importance of emotional and impulsive buying behaviour, which could be initiated by the feeling of stress, boredom, or seeing ads (Torkington, 2021). The convenience offered by the internet and the speed at which things move motivated impulsive purchases without a lot of thought behind them, which in other instances caused regret or even economic burden, especially in younger or low-income participants (Torkington, 2021).

The third theme highlighted why trust and perception of risk in digital buying were important. Respondents were keen on the existing platforms that stipulate the returns policy and safe payment methods (Torkington, 2021). Experience with fraud or customer service in the past resulted in more web-savvy behaviour, resulting in low postures mainly among older users. The main factors that determined the completion of the transaction were digital confidence and platform reputation (Torkington, 2021).

Response to the Research Objectives

In this research, four major objectives were focused on the online shopping behaviour of adults in South Wales. To begin with, it has been discovered that convenience, trust, emotional appeals, and usability of the platforms played significant roles in the purchase decisions (Torkington, 2021). Participants also appreciated the flexible timing of purchases; however, safe payment options, clear return policies, and trusted websites were used to reduce perceived risk. Stress or boredom could have led to impulsive purchases, particularly when the site was easy and quick to use (Torkington, 2021).

Second, the results indicated that online stores have transformed consumer behaviour, as most people have switched to using online stores instead of brick-and-mortar stores. The respondents referred to online stores as a convenient and inseparable aspect of their lifestyles, particularly with busy employees, low-income people, and inaccessible communities (Torkington, 2021).

Thirdly, purchase intentions were found to be influenced by social media, marketing, and peer reviews. Influencers and online advertisements were particularly important among younger audiences, whereas the ageing consumers trusted reviews and had less doubt (Umoh, 2025).

Finally, demographic conditions, including age, income, and location, were among the defining factors. The elderly and lower-income user segments were conservative and valuation-conscious, whereas younger and highly vaccinated consumers were much tech-savvy and welcomed impulsive behaviours. Rural respondents also had a connection and delivery constraint, and this affected their overall subscription to online shopping (Umoh, 2025).

Study Limitations

Even though this paper provides a useful understanding of how online shopping influences consumer behaviour in South Wales, some weaknesses should be given consideration. First, a relatively small sample size of population (17 participants) and a qualitative study used deprives the research of generalisability. Whereas purposive sampling guarantees notable voices, the findings relate to individual opinions, not statistically approved tendencies (Umoh, 2025).

Secondly, the only data collection method was based on open-ended questionnaires available online (Van Quaquebeke et al., 2022). Although this approach enabled participants to leave free and reflective responses, the approach limited the capability to ask follow-up questions and explore the themes further. Perhaps greater context and a deeper perspective on multiple behaviours and motivation would have been generated through in-depth interviews or focus groups (Van Quaquebeke et al., 2022).

Third, the respondents needed basic digital literacy to find and fill in the questionnaire. It could have inadvertently left out those with low access to the internet or those with less confidence in using online assets, especially older people or those who live in the digitally excluded regions, such as rural areas (Van Quaquebeke et al., 2022).

Lastly, the inherent bias in self-reported data covers recall errors and the social desirability effect (Van Quaquebeke et al., 2022). Although the possibility of underreporting given behaviours, i.e. impulsive purchases or purchases that led to regret, has been avoided, they could still affect such underreporting. The limitations could be overcome in future research by using mixed designs or bigger, more diverse samples (Van Quaquebeke et al., 2022).

Recommendations for Future Research

The present study can be used to base the knowledge about online shopping behaviour among adult people in South Wales, and it is suggested to conduct additional studies to expand the knowledge obtained with the help of this study (Van Quaquebeke et al., 2022). A mixed-method approach in future research would be a valuable addition, given the integration of the qualitative method used in interviews and the quantitative aspect of surveys. The emotional influence and digital trust, and social media influence could be discussed in more in-depth detail using the in-depth interview or focus groups (Van Quaquebeke et al., 2022).

Future research could also be improved by a larger and more representative sample, especially by including those who are underrepresented (people of older ages, people with disabilities, and people who live with limited access to digital solutions). The voice of the marginalised or even digitally excluded communities would also give a more comprehensive view of consumer behaviour all over the region (Vollero et al., 2023).

Also, longitudinal research would be useful to observe the changes in online behaviours of shopping behaviours over the period, particularly regarding technological and economic development or post-pandemic reshaping of retail markets. The impact of a digital literacy program on consumer confidence and security on the internet can also be researched by researchers (Vollero et al., 2023).

Finally, investigation of industry-specific behaviours (fashion, food delivery, or electronics, just as examples) or urban-rural e-commerce experience can come up with actionable findings useful to local retailers, policymakers, and consumer advocacy groups (Vollero et al., 2023).

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