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The Digital Consumer Economy: Purchasing Behavior of Youth in E-Commerce Markets

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Abstract

Background: The e-consumer economy is expanding by leaps and bounds, with youths being the prime drivers of growth in e-commerce. Businesses and platforms looking to survive in competitive online economies, such as Nepal, must have an understanding of youth buying habits and behavior.

Objective: The aim of this research was to explore Nepalese youth's platform preference and relative importance assigned to various website features with regards to buying behavior through e-commerce, as well as a gender comparison and age group.

Methods: Between January and May 2025, there was a cross-sectional, quantitative study conducted. Data were collected from an online survey of a sample of 202 Nepalese online users. The questionnaire collected demographic data, usage of the platform, and perceptions regarding e-commerce features on a 5-point Likert scale. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, Pearson correlation, and bootstrapping for validation.

Findings: The sample was evenly divided by gender (51% female, 49% male) and consisted mostly of well-educated young adults aged 21-25 years (60.9%) with easy internet access (74.8%). Daraz was the overwhelmingly leading platform, as 89.6% of respondents used it. Respondents exhibited high consistency and agreement on the crucial importance of all e-commerce features assessed, and the most highly prioritized items were ease of price comparison (Mean=1.85) and ease of website usability (Mean=1.89). There was significant gender disparity, and the females were in greater agreement on the importance of these features compared to the males (p=.032). There was a small positive correlation between age and feature importance (r=.167, p=.017) and this was corroborated by bootstrapping (95% CI: .055, .283).

Conclusion: The research concludes that Nepalese youth are homogeneous in terms of platform selection but have strong and particular expectations for their e-commerce experience, valuing convenience, cost-effectiveness, and ease of use. Gender and, to a lesser degree, age are important factors impacting such expectations.

Implication: The e-commerce organizations, particularly the market leaders like Daraz, must maintain a frictionless shopping experience, price transparency, and robust logistics to support the high aspirations of young consumers. Marketing and platform development initiatives must be customized to support the slightly higher expectations of women consumers.

Keywords: E-commerce; Youth; Purchasing Behavior; Digital Consumer; Daraz; Nepal; Online Shopping

Introduction

The world of retail has been transformed across the globe by the advent and proliferation of the internet, developing a robust digital consumer economy (Shi & Wei, 2024; Simon, 2020; Mirzaye & Mohiuddin, 2025). E-commerce has evolved from a niche trend to a fundamental pillar of

modern commerce, radically altering how consumers discover, consider, and purchase goods and services (Silva, 2025; Purcarea et al., 2022). For the younger generations, this shift is particularly pronounced, having grown up in a digitally saturated landscape (Cunha et al., 2024). Their choices, consumption patterns, and demands are not only shaping current market trends but also driving the future of retail and thus are a significant cohort for researchers and organizations to study (Priporas, 2017).

In developing economies like Nepal, the rise in internet penetration and smartphone usage has evoked a rapid embrace of e-shopping and a dynamic and growing marketplace. Young Nepalese people, increasingly urban, educated, and digitally connected, are at the forefront of this revolution in digital consumption (Dhakal & Acharya, 2025. The Nepalese e-commerce industry, however, has its own unique features, including platform monopolies and digital payment systems, that distinguish it from more advanced economies (Shrestha et al., 2025). The contours of this changing economy can be understood only through an appreciation of the nuances in the involvement of young Nepalese consumers with this digital economy.

Despite the market's potential, a significant gap exists between consumer expectations and the services provided by many e-commerce platforms. Key aspects of the online experience—such as website usability, transaction security, logistics efficiency, and price transparency—are critical determinants of consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Asawawibul et al., 2025). For entrepreneurs to prosper and for the industry to evolve sustainably, one must move beyond presumptions and empirically validate which traits rank highest with the core consumer segment. This implies empirical investigation explicitly targeting the pain points and priorities of this youth segment.

Therefore, this study is designed to investigate the online purchasing behavior of Nepalese youth. It aims to discover the most visited online shopping websites, quantify the degree of significance placed on various e-commerce website features, and ascertain whether these vary significantly based on demographic factors of gender and age. By availing evidence-based data, this research aims to provide valuable information for e-commerce businesses, marketers, and policymakers interested in servicing the digital consumer more effectively in Nepal's emerging economy.

Methodology

Applying a quantitative, cross-sectional research design, the research employed an online survey questionnaire to collect data from a sample of 202 active online using Nepalese young people (predominantly between the ages of 21-25). The non-probability sampling approach was employed between January and May 2025 to experiment with e-commerce purchasing behavior. The structured questionnaire, designed after a literature review, provided information on demographic details, utilization of sites, and perceptions of the principal e-commerce components. The collected data were analyzed through IBM SPSS, using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, correlation analysis, and bootstrapping to verify findings on gender and age dissimilarities in consumer expectation.

Results and Analysis

Table 1

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Male	99	49.0	49.0	49.0
Valid	Female	103	51.0	51.0	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0	

The sample approximates a balanced mix of male and female respondents with 103 females (51.0%) and 99 males (49.0%). This near-even balance ensures the study results regarding e-commerce behavior cannot be disproportionately influenced by one gender group. This balance generalizes the results, suggesting that they could reflect what the larger youth population was thinking as opposed to one gender's preferences or behavior.

Table 2

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Below 18	6	3.0	3.0	3.0
	18-20	35	17.3	17.3	20.3
Valid	21-25	123	60.9	60.9	81.2
	25 & above	38	18.8	18.8	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0	

The data reveal that the majority of respondents by far are in the age range 21-25 (60.9%), and therefore this is the focal group of the study. The second largest group is the 18-20 year-olds (17.3%), with the 25 years and above (18.8%), with a very negligible number of respondents aged below 18 (3.0%). This segmentation certainly attests that the sample is dominated by young adults, who tend to be highly digitally literate and are a prime target market for e-commerce websites, and hence the data becomes highly relevant to the area of study of youth online shopping behavior.

Table 3

What is your education level?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Secondary school	15	7.4	7.4	7.4
	High School	45	22.3	22.3	29.7
Valid	Bachelors	127	62.9	62.9	92.6
	Masters and above	15	7.4	7.4	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0	

The majority of the respondents (62.9%) hold a Bachelor's degree, reflecting the dominant 21-25 age group, most of whom are young university graduates or students. The second most prevalent category is High School (22.3%), followed by Secondary school or higher Bachelor's degree and Master's degree and higher, each a 7.4% proportion of the sample. This schooling background

suggests a sample with quite high levels of education, traditionally associated with higher use of the internet, more comfort with technology, and higher purchasing power, all of which are desirable elements in e-commerce usage.

Table 4

How would you describe your access to internet?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Easyt	151	74.8	74.8	74.8
	Medium	46	22.8	22.8	97.5
	Difficult	5	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0	

The vast majority (74.8%) of the sample responded their access to the internet as "Easy," with another 22.8% reporting it as "Medium." An extremely small minority (2.5%) experienced access as "Difficult." This indicates that the sample includes widely networked individuals for whom the internet is something easily accessible. This level of penetration is a necessary prerequisite for recurrent online shopping, so the respondents are well-placed to provide applicable detail on their internet shopping habits and preferences without the undue skew of low connectivity levels warping the results.

Table 5

Which platforms do you use for online shopping?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daraz	181	89.6	89.6	89.6
	Sasto Deal	5	2.5	2.5	92.1
	Hamro Bazar	11	5.4	5.4	97.5
	other	5	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	100.0	

The figures show a disproportionate one-platform dominance among this group: Daraz, to the value of 89.6% of the interviewees' use of it. All other websites (Sasto Deal, Hamro Bazar, etc.) are used by an extremely small portion of the sample, and each one uses 5.4% or less. This leaves Daraz as the e-commerce site that is virtually omnipresent among Nepalese youth and basically an alias for shopping online in this market. It is significant because it means that the collective consumer behavior in the study can be most accurately characterized as experience with and anticipation of this singular, ubiquitous platform.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of e-commerce features

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
a. Comparison of prices in online shopping should be easy to find the lowest price	202	1	5	1.85	.060	.853
b. Buying should be easy and the risk should be minimum from buyer's side	202	1	5	2.00	.058	.823
c. Fast and free shipping must be made country wide	202	1	4	1.99	.063	.892
d. Buyers should be able to interact with other buyers via social media	202	1	5	2.28	.070	.995
e. Websites should be easy to use	202	1	4	1.89	.058	.821
f. Smartphone users should be able to use websites via mobile apps	202	1	5	1.96	.064	.910
g. More payment system should be added to online shopping	202	1	5	2.11	.070	.993
Valid N (listwise)	202					

It can be seen from the given descriptive statistics that there is strong and consistent agreement among the 202 subjects in this study on the importance of various e-commerce features. The mean ratings on all the statements are clustered between 1.85 and 2.28, which, on a 1-to-5 scale on which 1 = "strongly agree," translates to a very high degree of agreement across the board. The lowest mean (1.85) is for price comparison, suggesting it is the best supported feature, followed closely by ease of use of websites (mean of 1.89). The highest mean (2.28), suggesting the weakest—though still positive—support, is the ability of buyers to communicate with sellers, but even this is well within the "somewhat agree" range. The low standard deviations (all below 1.0) also show that responses were not highly scattered but were solidly bunched around the mean and reflect a very high degree of consistency of opinion.

That agreement is consistent with the fact that modern consumer expectations of buying online are genuinely about convenience, efficiency, and cost savings. All of these respondents overwhelmingly agree that the online purchasing process must be smooth, with easy price comparison, straightforward purchase operations, simple-to-navigate websites, and clean smartphone experiences. The very high agreement regarding rapid and free shipping and more payment system options indicates an economic interest in value and convenience, wherein perceived aggravation regarding shipping costs and limited payment options can be substantial

purchase deterrents. In essence, the information speaks for itself: to meet consumer demand and shape buying behavior, online retailers must be committed to a frictionless, transparent, and economically advantageous customer experience.

Table 7

Group Statistics

	2. Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
e_commerece_features_mean	Male	99	2.0938	.62208	.06252
	Female	103	1.9320	.41329	.04072

Based on the provided group data, there appears to be a perceivable disparity among male and female respondents for attitudes towards e-commerce features. The mean score for males (Mean = 2.09) is higher than the mean score for females (Mean = 1.93). On a 1, "strongly agree," to 5, "strongly disagree," basis, this translates to female respondents, overall, agreeing more on the importance of e-commerce elements like easy price comparisons, fast shipping, and simple-to-navigate websites than their male counterparts. In addition, the increased standard deviation of .622 for men compared to .413 for women suggests that the men's responses were more spread out and disparate around their mean, with less consensus in their opinions. By contrast, the female responses were more bunched around their lower mean, showing a stronger and more homogenous level of consensus on the importance of these basic e-commerce characteristics.

Table 8

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
e_commerece_features_mean	Equal variances assumed	5.956	.016	2.185	200	.030	.16176	.07404	.01576	.30776
	Equal variances not assumed			2.168	169.481	.032	.16176	.07461	.01446	.30905

The Independent Samples Test shows that the difference in mean e-commerce feature attitudes noted between men and women is statistically significant. The Levene's Test (F=5.956, p=.016) verifies that the variances are not equal between the groups, thus results obtained from the "Equal variances not assumed" row should be used. The t-test (t(169.48)=2.168, p=.032) verifies a significant gender difference at the .05 level. The mean difference of .16176, having a 95% non-crossing zero confidence interval (.01446 to .30905), supports the conclusion that female

interviewees reported a significantly higher level of agreement regarding the importance of e-commerce features than male interviewees. This means that gender is truly a significant factor in ascertaining consumer expectations, with women rating the essential conveniences of web shopping higher.

Table 9

Correlations

		3. Age	e_commerece_features_mean
3. Age	Pearson Correlation	1	.167*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.017
	N	202	202
e_commerece_features_mean	Pearson Correlation	.167*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	
	N	202	202

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As per the correlation analysis, there is a statistically significant weak positive correlation between age and perceived importance assigned to e-commerce features (r = .167, p = .017). This indicates that as age increases in this sample of mostly young respondents, there is a weak tendency to indicate agreement more strongly with the prioritization of features like price comparison, ease of purchasing, and rapid shipping. However, the power of this relationship is extremely low, suggesting that age is a weak but measurable determinant of high e-commerce convenience attitudes across all ages for this research.

The value of significance (p = .017) is close to the usual .05 alpha level and also because the association is tenuous, it would be prudent to test the robustness of this finding by using bootstrapping. Bootstrapping would generate a sampling distribution of the correlation coefficient by repeatedly resampling with replacement from the data at hand. This method is particularly helpful here to make sure that the extreme p-value is not overly sensitive to the special characteristics of this one sample or to any minor statistical assumptions. A 95% bootstrapped confidence interval on the Pearson correlation would provide a better estimate of the genuine quality of this relationship in the population. If the bootstrapped confidence interval does not contain zero, it would make one more confident in the conclusion that this weak positive correlation is an actual effect.

Table 10

Correlations

			3. Age	e_commerece_features_mean
3. Age	Pearson Correlation		1	.167*
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.017
	N		202	202
	Bootstrap^c	Bias	0	-.003
		Std. Error	0	.058

		95% Confidence Interval	Lower	1	.055
			Upper	1	.283
		Pearson Correlation		.167*	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.017	
		N		202	202
e_commerece_features_mean	Bootstrap^c	Bias		-.003	0
		Std. Error		.058	0
		95% Confidence Interval	Lower	.055	1
			Upper	.283	1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

c. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

The bootstrap analysis also confirms the initial finding of a statistically significant but weak positive correlation (r = .167, p = .017) between age and the importance allocated to e-commerce attributes. The bootstrapped 95% confidence interval for the correlation coefficient ranges from .055 to .283. More importantly, this range does not include zero, which is strong evidence that the weak positive correlation discovered in the original sample is genuine and not due to sampling variation. The minimal bias of -.003 and standard error of .058 affirm that the original Pearson correlation is a dependable and practically unbiased estimate of the population parameter. Therefore, we can be confident that in this sample, advanced age correlates with a modest but statistically significant increase in agreement with the importance of fundamental e-commerce attributes.

Conclusion

The study discovers that the Nepali youth e-commerce market is one of high homogeneity of platform choice, with Daraz as a virtual monopoly, but it is also characterized by exceptionally high and non-negotiable consumer demands for an uninterupted online experience. The findings emphasize that young, digitally native consumers overall demand utmost convenience, as evident through their evident concordance on the categorical necessity of features including effortless price comparison, easy interfaces, and quick, no-cost shipping. Further, the evidence of statistically significant differences, where females and slightly older respondents evince an even greater degree of concordance with these features, shows that while this expectation is widespread, it is not universal. Therefore, for e-commerce sites to thrive, they must not only guarantee underpinnings of operational excellence but also capitalize on advanced, insights-based methods that are sensitive to the specific intensities of demand in key demographic cohorts.

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