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**AN ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE CONSUMERS'
DECISION-MAKING IN ONLINE SHOPPING**

A study of Mantra Craft Store in Nepal

Thesis

CENTRIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Business Management

November 2023



ABSTRACT

Centria University of Applied Sciences	Date May 2024	Author Srijana Kumari Ghimire
Degree programme Bachelor of Business Administration, Business Management		
Name of thesis AN ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS THAT INFLUNCE CONSUMERS' DECI-SION-MAKING IN ONLINE SHOPPING - A study of Mantra Craft Store in Nepal		
Centria supervisor Katja Viiliäinen-Tyni	Pages 29 + 8	
<p>The thesis aims to study the factors that influence the customers decision-making in online shopping. With the growing number of internet users around the world and the increasing popularity of online shopping due its convenience and time-saving feature, businesses have started to call them/label themselves and use different strategies to influence the decision making of the customers during online shopping.</p> <p>This thesis begins an extensive investigation intended to unravel the complex web of influences that direct customers in their online purchasing decisions, using the case study of Mantra Craft Store as a focal point. An excellent place to examine the many factors influencing customer decisions in the context of an e-commerce platform offering craft products is Mantra Craft Store, a well-known player in the online retail space.</p> <p>The research part of the thesis was done by using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The data were collected through an online survey and offline interview with people of Mantra Craft Store and e external digital marketing customers and experts in Nepal.</p> <p>The main objective of this research is to provide insight into the variety of elements influencing customers' decision-making processes when they engage with the online store of Mantra Craft Store. Through exploring these factors, which include behavioural and psychological elements as well as technical developments and marketing tactics, this study aims to offer priceless insights for both academia and industry.</p>		

<p>Key words Branding, Customer Decision making, Digital Marketing, E-commerce, Online Shopping</p>

CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

CBE

Consumer-based brand equity (CBE) is how these attitudes contact is towards your brand influence and the success of your business overall.

M-commerce

Mobile Commerce (M-Commerce) is a form of online shopping that enables users to access online shopping platforms without the use of a desktop computer.

Tailored Marketing

Tailored Marketing is the marketing strategy that customizes marketing messages to consumers based on their preferences and behaviours.

Virtual Shopping

Virtual shopping refers to an e-commerce service that allows customers to browse and purchase items online.

ABSTRACT
CONCEPT DEFINITIONS
CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Aims of the Study	2
1.2 Objectives of the Study	2
2 ONLINE SHOPPING	3
2.1 Overview of Online Shopping	3
2.1.1 Evolution of the shopping experience of Customers.....	3
2.1.2 Influential factors during online shopping	4
2.1.3 Use of Technology for Online Shopping	5
2.2 Factors affecting customer decisions in online shopping.....	5
3 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN ONLINE SHOPPING	7
3.1 Digital Marketing for Online Shopping	7
3.2 Trends and Statistics on online shopping.....	8
3.3 Consumer Decision Making during online shopping.....	8
3.3.1 Problem Recognition	9
3.3.2 Purchase Decision making of Customer.	10
3.3.3 Cultural and Technological factor	10
3.3.4 Post purchase evaluation.....	11
4 DATA ANALYSIS	13
4.1 Research Methodology.....	13
4.2 Research Design	14
4.3 Data Procedure/Method	14
4.3.1 Case Study Approach	14
4.4 Analysis of Survey Data.....	15
4.4.1 Basic Information of Respondents	15
4.4.2 Factors affecting the online shopping experience of customers.	24
4.4.3 Interviews with Mantra Handicraft Stakeholder	25
5 FINDINGS	26
5.1 Mantra Handicraft Overview	26
5.2 Decision Factors	26
5.2.1 Product Quality and Pricing.....	27
5.2.2 Trustworthiness and User Experience.....	27
6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	29
REFERENCES.....	9
APPENDICES	
FIGURES	
FIGURE 1. Distribution of gender.....	16
FIGURE 2. Distribution of Age.....	16

FIGURE 3. Representing the number of times that customers shop in e-commerce stores	17
FIGURE 4. Representing the scale that customer brands present in online and physical stores.....	17
FIGURE 5. Representation of Convenience of online shopping to customers.....	18
FIGURE 6. Representation of e-commerce sites usefulness to customers	19
FIGURE 7. Representation of factors that matters to customer while online shopping.....	19
FIGURE 8. Representation of the digital marketing on the customer purchasing	19
FIGURE 9. Representation of the customers interaction with customer support of a brand.....	20
FIGURE 10. Representation of the customers who follow brand social media for updates	21
FIGURE 11. Representation of the customers who bought being influenced by online ads.....	21
FIGURE 12. Representation of customers who feel safe during online transaction	22
FIGURE 13. Representation of the customers who faced an issue during online shopping	22
FIGURE 14. Representation of customer's opinion on online shopping.	23
FIGURE 15. Representation of customers view on traditional shopping.....	23
FIGURE 16. Representation of customer's choice between online and physical shopping.....	24

1 INTRODUCTION

Online shopping has become an important part of consumers' behaviour in a world where the digital revolution has completely changed the nature of trade. This thesis is a study on the complex network of factors that determine consumers' choices when they purchase online. The way people connect, communicate, and make purchases in the online marketplace has changed dramatically because of the development of e-commerce platforms and the widespread integration of technology into people's lifestyles.

A significant change in consumer behaviour, particularly around online shopping, has been sparked by the digital age (Shrestha 2016, 48). The thesis examines the various factors influencing consumers' decision-making procedures in this ever-changing world of the Internet. Thakur (2023, 60) discusses the widespread use of e-commerce platforms the constantly changing technology landscape changed how people search, evaluate, and ultimately select goods and services in online marketplaces. Understanding how complex numbers influence these choices is not only related to school and learning but also a need for companies looking to stay ahead and competitive in constantly changing business scenarios.

Online shopping has totally changed and improved the thinking and expanded market reach worldwide, thus becoming an extremely important aspect for today's consumers throughout the world. Yan and Dai (2009, 89) state that the internet has provided a different shopping experience in various ways to consumers, as there are many more benefits for consumers to purchase online. For instance, they can buy products without the limit of space and time, and they can access more information than ever before with the help of search engines and other exploration tools on the internet, and thus consumers will feel more joyful and active during the online purchase process. This thesis dives deeply into these influencing elements, concentrating on Mantra Handicraft, the well-known online marketplace for Nepali statues and handicrafts.

The development of internet shopping has completely changed how people interact with goods and decide what to buy. The shift in customer behaviour can be caused by the advent of online markets. Convenience, accessibility, and a wide range of offers. Considering this, Mantra Handicraft stands out as a significant participant in the international online market for Nepali artworks, establishing a name for itself via its distinctive and genuine products. Not only is it interesting from an educational perspective but it also has applications for companies in related markets.

1.1 Aims of the Study

The thesis seeks to achieve several important goals. First and foremost, it aims to pinpoint the main variables that impact customers' choices when they purchase products/services online. The thesis aims to conduct a thorough examination of the various strategies implemented by Mantra Handicraft to satisfy the varied requirements and inclinations of its worldwide customers. In the context of Nepali handicraft, it seeks to evaluate the influence of cultural, social, and technological aspects on consumer online shopping behaviour. The study also aims to offer insightful analysis and suggestions that will not only benefit companies, especially Mantra Handicraft, but will also significantly improve the conversation about consumer behaviour in the ever- changing business scenarios.

The central chapter of the thesis presents the research and an examination of the variables influencing customer behaviour in relation to Mantra Handicraft. This offers an insightful analysis of the complexity of consumer behaviour by making links between theoretical frameworks and facts. This part offers an insightful analysis of the details of consumer behaviour. This section then shifts to a discussion of the implications drawn from the research findings and provides useful advice for companies that operate in the internet market for cultural and artistic goods, especially in the Nepali handicraft market.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objective of the thesis is to study the factors influencing customer decisions in online shopping and the type of strategy that the business uses to influence those decisions through the forms like digital marketing.

The thesis will further discover the factors that affect the decision and behaviour of consumers to purchase any products of a company in the phase of online shopping by case-studying Mantra Craft Store. It will also study the theories used by companies to influence the decision to purchase their products and the way digital marketing is influencing consumers' perceptions of Mantra Craft. The thesis also studies the current habits of customers who shop digitally and the motives of companies behind branding, digital marketing, and online campaigns. This gives a clear sight of the factors that influence the decision-making process in online shopping from a customer and business perspective.

2 ONLINE SHOPPING

Online shopping, which we may do from our computers or mobile devices, is the act of purchasing goods over the internet. The internet's rapid growth has transformed business sales, leading to the rise of online shopping, enabling customers to research, choose, and purchase goods and services globally.

2.1 Overview of Online Shopping

The increasing use of the internet has caused a revolution in the way businesses conduct their sales, which has resulted in the rise and rapid growth of online shopping. Online shopping is made possible by e-commerce platforms, and it is the process by which customers investigate, choose, and buy goods and services using the internet. This method of purchasing provides consumers with ease by removing geographical restrictions and putting a wide range of goods and services at their fingertips. Online shopping has transformed traditional business dynamics globally, forcing firms and customers to adjust to this new digital paradigm (Sagar 2024,12). Online shopping has become a habit of people's purchasing behaviours across a wide range of demographics and geographic regions in today's time due to its accessibility, convenience of use, availability anytime, automatic recommendations, and variety of payment alternatives.

Online purchasing has been expanding in Nepal, with its own special qualities and limitations (Vaidya 2019, 72). On this growing platform, the Mantra Craft Store occupies a specialised space in the country's growing e-commerce industry. Understanding the elements that affect consumers' decisions when they shop online, particularly within the website of the Mantra Craft Store, is crucial as Nepal continues to learn new technology and ways and sees a rise in the percentage of its population using the internet. To better understand the complexities of consumer behaviour, this study looks at how cultural, social, and economic variables interact to influence consumers' preferences and decisions when they purchase online at Mantra Craft Store.

2.1.1 Evolution of the shopping experience of Customers

The act of shopping, which was formerly limited to physical businesses and marketplaces, has undergone a remarkable transformation with the development of technology and the internet. The history of virtual

shopping dates to the early 1990s, while eBay and Amazon were start-ups in e-commerce, showing the world a new way to do business and shop. This change marked the beginning of a spectacular shift in consumer behaviour as people began to discover how suitable it was to buy products and services online, overcoming time and location barriers (Rai & Rai 2020).

Online shopping started with the growing use of smartphones, increased internet users, the development of different forms of online payment, and the development of websites, which introduced people to e-commerce and its idea, then transformed the way people buy and sell goods and services (Shrestha, 2016). The COVID-19 epidemic served to advance the pace of internet purchasing as social distance and lockdown measures forced people to turn to digital channels for their requirements. Online shopping is becoming an essential part of the modern consumer's lifestyle, providing them with a wide range of products and services at their fingertips and with effortlessness. This transformation is still going on and will develop more in the future. Understanding the history of purchasing is essential to appreciating the many factors that influence consumers' choices when it comes to online shopping and selling.

2.1.2 Influential factors during online shopping

The user experience when purchasing online is shaped by a variety of circumstances, but a few essential components stand out as crucial influences for decision shaping. First, a key component becomes apparent: the function of website usability and interface (Manandhar & Chalise, 2023). The user experience is greatly impacted by the visual attractiveness, intuitive design, and simplicity of navigation on the site. Research suggests that user-friendly interfaces, easily understandable product details, and quick and easy checkout procedures have a big impact on customers' opinions and likelihood of buying. Secondly, the influence of the social component on consumer behaviour. Thakur (2023, 60) discusses how user-generated material, reviews, and ratings are examples of social evidence that has a significant impact on purchasing decisions. Positive evaluations and testimonials frequently work as a potent validation mechanism, building potential customers' trust and confidence and influencing their decisions during the shopping journey.

It is impossible to overstate the role that targeted and tailored marketing methods have in shaping consumers' online purchasing habits. Customised offers, recommendations, and ads that are based on user browsing history and interests have a significant impact on influencing users to purchase goods or services. The convergence of social validation, tailored marketing, and user-friendly interfaces shapes

online shoppers' decision-making processes and highlights the complex interactions between technological, social, and psychological components in the virtual economy.

2.1.3 Use of Technology for Online Shopping

Technology has emerged as the key component of the online buying experience, transforming how customers engage with and move through the online store. The way that e-commerce operates has changed because of the incorporation of cutting-edge technology like machine learning, augmented reality, and artificial intelligence in their online stores (Li 2023, 708). Personalized recommendations and predictive analytics are powered by AI-driven algorithms, which improve the shopping experience by making customized product recommendations based on user preferences and historical activity. Moreover, the emergence of augmented reality (AR) technology has eliminated the distinction between traditional brick-and-mortar and virtual shopping by enabling customers to digitally view things in authentic environments. This reduces uncertainty regarding dimensions, hue, and appropriateness before making a purchase.

The landscape of online purchasing has irreversibly changed due to the widespread usage of mobile devices. With its easy accessibility and convenience, mobile commerce (m-commerce) has taken off, providing customers with anytime, anywhere access to the things that customer wants. Convenient mobile applications and safe payment gateways have made transactions easy and accelerated the decision-making process (Sherali, 2014). Furthermore, the incorporation of chatbots and virtual assistants has improved the whole shopping experience by providing prompt customer help, direction, and real-time query resolution. Online shopping and technology have a symbiotic relationship that is always changing, influencing customer tastes and behaviour in the virtual marketplace.

2.2 Factors affecting customer decisions in online shopping.

When it comes to online shopping, customers' purchasing decisions are still heavily influenced by pricing. Competitive prices or captivating discounts frequently work as strong inducements, influencing customers to choose specific goods or services. According to (NewtonX, Dec 2023), price sensitivity has a big influence on consumer behaviour. Before making a purchase, many customers actively look

for discounts, flash specials, or comparable prices across several websites. Pricing has a significant influence on consumers' impression of value for money, and they often consider it while choosing among the countless options that are accessible online.

Having access to thorough product details and user feedback and evaluations is crucial when it comes to influencing customers' decisions to buy online. When evaluating a product's suitability and quality, consumers mostly rely on thorough descriptions, technical details, and visual content. Additionally, peer evaluations and ratings offer insightful perspectives into other customers' actual experiences, which has a big impact on confidence and trust in the purchase of a customer (Chen, Samaranayake, Cen, Qi & Lan, 2022). While bad reviews can discourage potential consumers, they also serve as a catalyst, encouraging reluctant buyers to complete their transactions and highlighting the importance of user-generated material in the decision-making process.

The online shopping platform's reliability and convenience have a significant impact on the decisions made by customers. A favourable purchasing experience is greatly enhanced by elements like easy-to-use interfaces, safe payment channels, hassle-free return policies, and dependable customer service. Platforms that provide smooth navigation, smooth checkout procedures, and guarantees about the protection of their personal and financial data are typically preferred by customers (Maharjan & Khadka, 2017). Furthermore, well-known companies or platforms that have a track record of dependability and quick service build confidence, which encourages repeat business and influences prospective clients' decision-making.

3 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN ONLINE SHOPPING

Technology and the rapid advancement of the internet have drastically changed the business industry and revolutionised how customers make purchases. Online shopping is becoming more and more popular as an e-commerce platform, and is growing in popularity because of its easy accessibility, ease of use, time-saving features, and availability of a wide range of products (Statista, 2023). This change has led academics and researchers to investigate a wide range of variables that affect customers' decision-making when it comes to internet shopping.

Online business and shopping must face the traditional way of buying goods, which has been established as a habit among customers since ancient times. Traditional consumer behaviour theories cannot explain their online purchases effectively (Yan & Dai, 2009). Offline shopping gives customers assurance and confidence in the products they buy while the online environment offers a new way, to create, develop, and manage services offered to online grocery customers (Bauerova, 2018).

3.1 Digital Marketing for Online Shopping

Digital marketing acts as a catalyst to influence consumers' decision-making processes, and it is crucial in determining how online customer behaviour is shaped. Digital marketing aims to provide a smooth and appealing purchasing experience with targeted advertising campaigns, tailored recommendations, and clever content placement. Marques (2019, 7) discuss that the brands use a variety of platforms, including social media, email marketing, and search engines, to interact with customers several times during their online buying process. Comprehending the workings of digital marketing tactics is crucial when analysing the factors that influence consumers' decisions to buy when they shop online.

Personalisation is a major component of digital marketing for online retailers. The decision-making process is greatly influenced by customised ads and product recommendations based on consumer behaviour, tastes, and demographics (Wright, 2024). Customising recommendations and fostering a feeling of personalised attention are made possible by algorithms that examine previous purchases, browsing history, and interactions. Targeted marketing campaigns also try to predict customer demands by offering pertinent goods or services at the appropriate time, which influences customers' decisions by creating a sense of relevance and connection.

Effective online marketing techniques in the digital era are based on building consumer trust and engagement by capturing their attention. Trust is strengthened by interesting and eye-pleasing contents, sincere evaluations, interactive features, and open communication regarding the calibre and timeliness of the products (Isa, Yusoff, Rasli & Khan, 2015). Additionally, establishing an online community through influencer partnerships and social media participation raises brand awareness and develops a devoted following of customers. Determining the elements that eventually help customers make wise selections when it comes to online shopping requires an understanding of how these digital marketing initiatives affect consumer trust and engagement.

3.2 Trends and Statistics on online shopping

The popularity of online shopping has increased dramatically in recent years, and impressive records and data show how consumer behaviour is changing globally in terms of tastes and habits. With more than 5 billion people, the number of individuals using the internet to make transactions is constantly rising. Retail e-commerce sales are expected to surpass 5.7 trillion USD globally in 2022, and this amount will only rise in the future (Statista, 2022). Online shopping adoption was further improved by the pandemic-induced shift in consumer behaviour, as seen by a considerable increase in the number of first-time online buyers across a range of demographics. Furthermore, research shows that mobile commerce (m-commerce) is constantly growing, with smartphones and other portable devices accounting for a sizable share of internet transactions.

With over 15.85 million internet users (Datareportal, 2023), Nepal is the 93rd largest market for e-commerce, with a predicted revenue of US\$603.1 million by 2023 (ECDE, 2023). Understanding these trends is pivotal in analysing the factors that influence consumers' decision-making processes in online shopping environments like the Mantra Craft Store in Nepal.

3.3 Consumer Decision Making during online shopping

When it comes to internet shopping, consumers make decisions based on a wide range of factors. Before making a purchase, customers go through several behavioural, emotional, and cognitive processes (Lee, & Lee 2009). The process of making decisions frequently begins with the identification of a need or

want, which is followed by the gathering of information and consideration of available options. In the digital realm, this stage entails exploring diverse e-commerce platforms and contrasting products according to factors such as cost, calibre, feedback, and the reputation of the business. Convenience, accessibility, and website usability are examples of factors that significantly impact how consumers perceive products and make decisions (Maharjan & Khadka, 2017). Moreover, the decision-making process is significantly influenced by social factors, including online reviews, recommendations from peers, and social media interactions. Customers frequently look to these outside indications to confirm their decisions and lessen the perceived danger of doing business online.

There are few situational and psychological aspects affecting the purchasing choice of a customer. Individual preferences, attitudes, motives, and perceptions influenced by past experiences and cultural backgrounds are all considered psychological influences (Rai & Rai, 2020). The situational elements are also very important in completing the transaction, such as time limits, special deals, and the urgency of the requirement. Comprehending the complicated interactions among these elements is crucial for deciphering the intricacies of consumer choice in the e-commerce domain, specifically concerning the Mantra Craft Store situated in Nepal. The purpose of this investigation is to learn more about these factors and how they affect consumer behaviour in this e-commerce setting.

3.3.1 Problem Recognition

Online shopping offers accessibility and convenience, but there are still several problems and difficulties in this digital retail environment. The matter of privacy and security is one major worry. Customers frequently voice concerns about the safety of their credit card information, personal information, and the possibility of online fraud (Bajracharya, & Chatterjee, 2023). Consumer trust in online transactions is impacted by cybersecurity threats, data breaches, and the unlawful use of personal data, all of which remain serious concerns (Maharjan, Devkota, Mahapatra, Padda, Dhakal, Mahato, Khanal, Parajuli, Paudel, & Bhattra, 2022). Another issue is that there is no physical interaction with things prior to buying. Based only on online descriptions and photographs, consumers find it difficult to determine the quality, size, or authenticity of products, which can cause unhappiness upon shipment and increase the number of product returns and exchanges. The difference between the perceived product and the actual delivered item can result in a loss of trust and credibility for the e-commerce platform.

Customer discontent is also influenced by practical problems, including complicated return procedures, expensive shipping, and delayed deliveries. Uncertainties about delivery schedules and possible extra costs frequently make internet purchasing less enjoyable overall. Moreover, the lack of tailored aid or prompt customer service when addressing questions or grievances makes customers even more irate. These issues affect overall customer happiness and loyalty to online shopping platforms, posing difficulties for both customers and online retailers. It is vital to comprehend and tackle these concerns to improve the virtual shopping encounter and cultivate customer trust, especially in relation to the Mantra Craft Store located in Nepal. This investigation looks at ways to lessen these issues and enhance consumers' entire online shopping decision-making process.

3.3.2 Purchase Decision making of Customer.

Customers make decisions based on an energetic interaction of several cognitive, emotional, and relational elements that influence their purchasing decisions, when it comes to online shopping. Online resources provide a wealth of information, enabling users to peruse product narratives, evaluations, and comparisons between numerous brands and traders (Hussain & Rehman, 2018). This lengthy search stage is essential for creating selections and awareness, which in turn affects the attitudes and purposes of customers on the way to goods and services. Online shopping's availability and facility of use help to overview this process by letting customers easily browse through a vast range of options from the comfort of their homes or any other place with internet access. Public influences like recommendations from friends, famous people, or internet reviews have a remarkable impact on how consumers make decisions. Psychological elements include individual preference, observation of value, and product loyalty.

3.3.3 Cultural and Technological factor

Customer habits and preferences are greatly influenced by cultural and technological factors that are deeply ingrained in the dynamics of online buying decision-making. Cultural influences, which have their roots in society norms, values, and customs, have a significant impact on consumer decision-making (Hussain & Rehman, 2018). When it comes to shopping online at the Mantra Craft Store in Nepal, cultural influences include things like distinct tastes in artisanal craftsmanship, regional customs, and product or design preferences. It is extremely important for online stores to understand and go along with these culturally small but important things to properly serve the preferences of Nepalese customers. Furthermore, the environment of online shopping is always changing due to technological advancement

and growth. Consumers' access to online platforms and their overall online purchasing experience are directly impacted by factors including internet penetration, mobile device usage, and the availability of high-speed connectivity. Thakur (2023) explains how customers' decision-making processes in the digital marketplace are greatly influenced by important technological variables such as website responsiveness, ease of navigation, and integration of secure payment channels.

Furthermore, the influence on consumer behaviour is further amplified by the convergence of culture and technology. For example, social media platforms' acceptance as powerful avenues for peer recommendations and product discovery combines technological developments with cultural indoctrination. Consumer decision-making in Nepal is influenced by the interaction between new technological developments and strongly rooted cultural values. Online retailers face both opportunities and challenges because of this fusion, which makes it necessary to have a sophisticated grasp of how cultural and technological elements interact to shape consumers (Aryal, 2021). To provide insights on customising methods that align with the cultural norms and technology preferences of Nepalese consumers and eventually influence their decision-making processes, this analysis aims to untangle the complexities resulting from these intersections.

3.3.4 Post purchase evaluation

The completion of a transaction does not mean that an online shopper's trip ends; instead, it pushes businesses into a crucial stage called post-purchase analysis. In this stage, the customer evaluates the good or service they have purchased by comparing their expectations with the real experience they had. Post-purchase assessment includes a few factors, such as customer service, delivery experience, product quality, and general satisfaction with the online purchasing transaction (UKEssays, 2018). Online consumers frequently form opinions about a company by contrasting the benefits they expected from it with the actual value they received. These opinions have a big impact on their future purchasing decisions and brand loyalty. The ease with which this assessment process may be started online with reviews, ratings, and feedback methods enables customers to share their experiences, adding to the pool of knowledge for future purchasers and impacting their decisions.

The post-purchase assessment is a critical factor in determining consumer happiness and loyalty. Good post-purchase experiences encourage brand promotion and favourable word-of-mouth recommenda-

tions, in addition to strengthening consumer trust in the e-commerce platform (Dejsiriphun & Suviratvithaya, 2011). On the other hand, any disparities between what is expected and what is delivered might cause discontent, which could harm the brand's reputation and discourage customers from making additional purchases. Knowing the subtleties of post-purchase evaluation is essential in the context of Nepal's Mantra Craft Store. To improve the current online shopping experience and develop long-lasting relationships with customers that will impact their decision-making in future online purchases, it is critical to analyse customer feedback, satisfaction levels, and post-purchase experiences (Gelhever, 2022). The goal of this analysis is to learn more about the consequences of post-purchase assessments and their significance in shaping consumer behaviours within the online shopping landscape.

4 DATA ANALYSIS

For the data and analysis, I have relied on both primary and secondary sources. The primary source includes respondents from Mahendra Dhamala (Founder), Laxman Dhamala (Marketing Executive), Shree Krishna Poudyal (Freight Executive), and Shreeza Lama (Store Handler) at Mantra Craft Store. The secondary sources include the articles, these papers, research data, etc.

4.1 Research Methodology

The research part is the most crucial parameter that will help to produce results on a specific topic. The selection of a better research approach is vital to handling the empirical part of the research. According to Kothari (2004, 1), research comprises defining and redefining problems, formulating hypotheses or suggested solutions; collecting, organising, and evaluating data; making deductions and reaching conclusions; and, at last, carefully testing the conclusions to determine whether they fit the formulating hypothesis.

The thesis follows a methodical approach to offer a thorough investigation of the factors affecting consumers' choices when they shop online, with a particular emphasis on Mantra Handicraft, a well-known Nepali traditional marketplace. The basis is provided, which offers an extensive analysis of pertinent research on how consumers make decisions when they shop online. Expanding upon this theoretical framework, it explores the methodological details utilised in this study, providing a thorough examination of the techniques for data collection and analysis.

The thesis uses both qualitative and quantitative data. The semi-structured interview research approach was used to conduct the qualitative portion of this study. One very effective instrument for the research technique is the interview. The interview can give the researcher more in-depth information, and the researcher can follow up with further questions to seek further clarification or answers to questions related to the study subject. On the other hand, the Mantra Craft store's data record and secondary sources provided the quantitative data.

4.2 Research Design

The main technique used to collect data for a qualitative study design was an in-person and online interview. Utilising data analysis, the information gathered from the various respondents was made quantitative. Interview questions were used to collect data from the chosen respondents from the Mantra Craft Store. To provide the most thorough data collection, the study participants were given a self-administration questionnaire with both closed- and open-ended items.

Understanding the quantitative data in the context of its application was the goal of the data collection. Mantra Craft provided the required qualitative and quantitative information. The necessary additional quantitative data was obtained from reliable internet sources.

4.3 Data Procedure/Method

For the thesis, both the primary and secondary data have been used to identify the findings. The findings were then used to compare them with those of other researchers. Primary data was collected from five people involved in and working in the Mantra Craft business. The sources were guided interviews, both personal and online, as well as questionnaires that can be filled out during the interview for objective and short-answer questions.

The sources of primary data were experienced working in e-commerce businesses, Experienced dealing with customers who shop through online, with digital marketing and branding while the secondary sources were research journals and other published articles. Data from other similar studies is leveraged in the study as well. The other sources were published research journals from different universities, relevant reports on the behaviour of customers, and published data on brand reach and effect.

4.3.1 Case Study Approach

An interesting topic for a case study method to comprehend the variables influencing consumers' decision-making processes in the domain of online shopping is the Mantra Craft Store in Nepal. Mantra Craft is a singular entity in Nepal's e-commerce scene, demonstrating the marriage of internet shopping, artisanal workmanship, and cultural heritage. A Mantra Craft case study provides an opportunity to explore the complexities of customer behaviour in a niche market in detail. The investigation of this e-commerce

platform enables a thorough analysis of the interactions among cultural factors, technological advancements, and consumer preferences. This case study, which focuses on Mantra Craft, seeks to clarify the complications resulting from the combination of traditional craftsmanship with contemporary internet retail practices, shedding light on how these factors shape and guide consumer decision-making processes.

In addition, using a case study approach for Mantra Craft offers a thorough comprehension of the prospects and difficulties specific to this specific e-commerce platform. The research can take on multiple forms, such as evaluating the impact of cultural nuances on product selections, studying consumer feedback, analysing browsing and purchase activities, and assessing the efficiency of technological interfaces in promoting consumer involvement. This thesis aims to close the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical implications by using a case study methodology for Mantra Craft. It does this by providing insightful analysis and strategic recommendations for improving the online shopping experience at Mantra Craft and possibly influencing more general e-commerce practices within the Nepalese context.

4.4 Analysis of Survey Data

The survey prepared for the research was first tested among the company employees and colleagues to determine whether the question was reliable for thesis research and understandable. The survey was posted through google forms and 33 customers participated. The survey questionnaire was divided into two different sections, A and B. Section A accounts for general demographic data and an overview of online shopping; Section B inquiries about the customer shopping experience and the factors that affect their purchase decision.

4.4.1 Basic Information of Respondents

1. Gender (N=33)

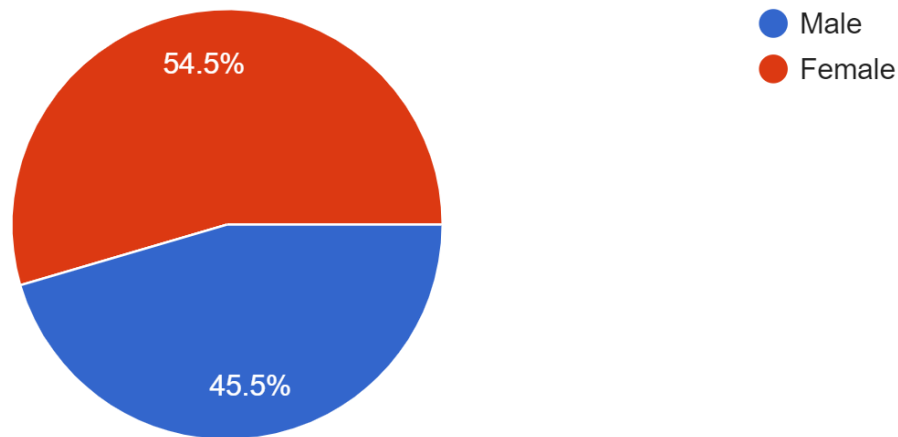


Figure 1: Distribution of gender

As Figure 1 illustrates, 45.5% of the respondents were male and the rest of 54.5% were female. The research shows the number of likely participants to be female. However, the overall customers of online shopping are not confirmed from the obtained data.

2. Age (N = 33)

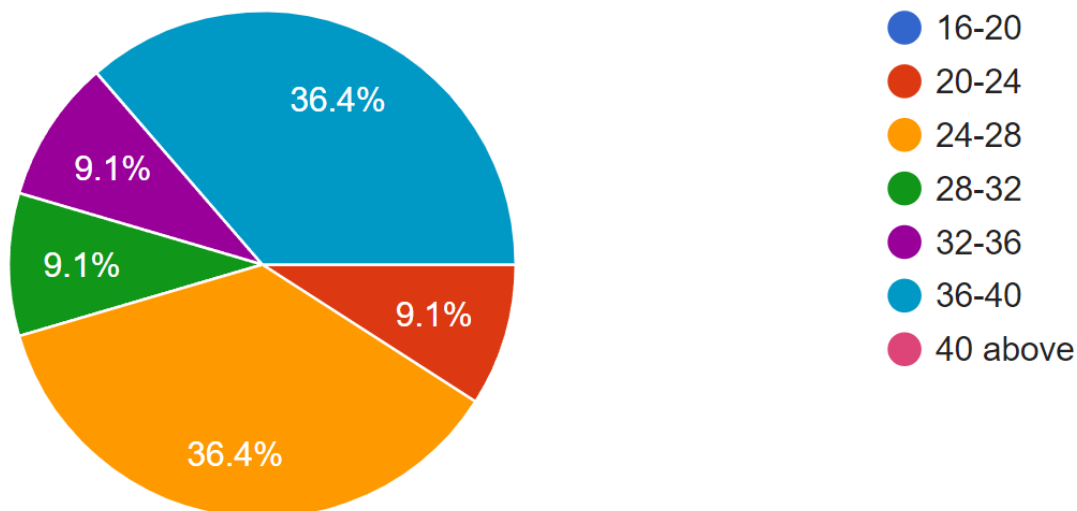


Figure 2: Distribution of age

The above pie chart shows that about 9.1% of customers belong to the age group of 20-24, 36.4% belong to 24-28, 9.1% belong to the age group of 28-32, 9.1% are in the 32-36 age group, and 36.4% are in the 36-40 age group. According to the research, customers who are between 24-28 and 36-40 years old are

very active in e-commerce activities, and companies can take advantage of this by targeting more customers through social media.

3. How often do you shop online?

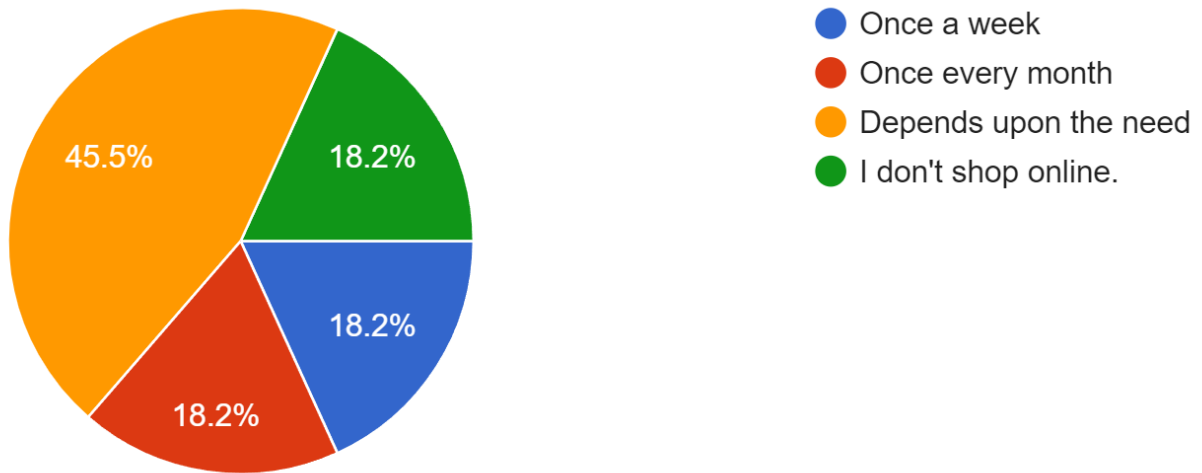


Figure 3: Representing the number of times that customers shop in e-commerce stores.

According to the respondents, about 45.5% of customers do online shopping only when they need it; 18.2% of them spend once a week or once a month; and the same number of respondents do not shop online. The obtained data shows that customers shop online only when they need the things that they wish to buy. There are few who shop online without having the need for the products.

4. On a scale of 1-5, How likely you are to trust a brand and products that are present in the following channels?

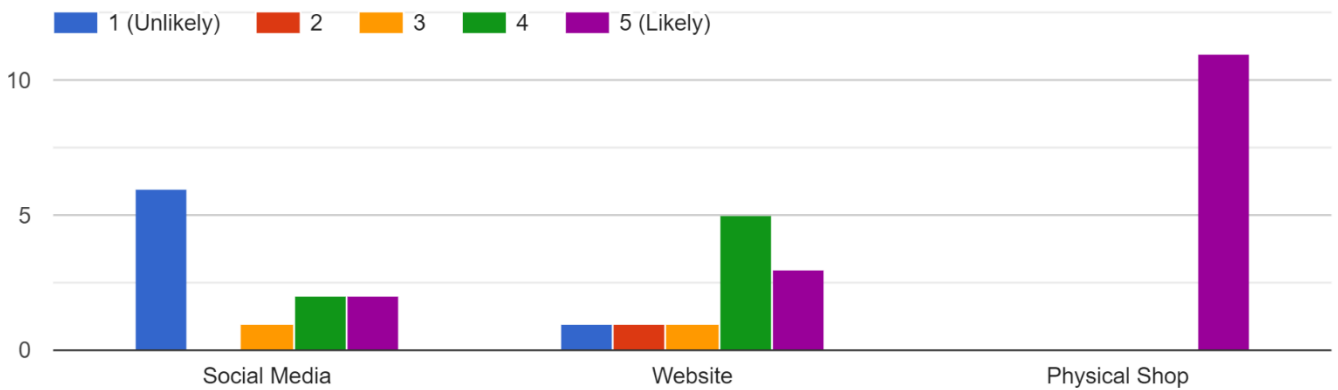


Figure 4: Representing the scale that the customer trust brands present in online and physical stores.

According to the respondents collected data, customers have full trust in the brands that are presented in the physical shops, but customers are unlikely to trust a brand that is present on social media and e-commerce sites. The presence of top brands on social media like Coca-Cola, Nike, Adidas, KFC, etc. is excluded as they have been in business and branding for generations.

5. On a scale of 1-5, How convenient has online shopping been in your experience?

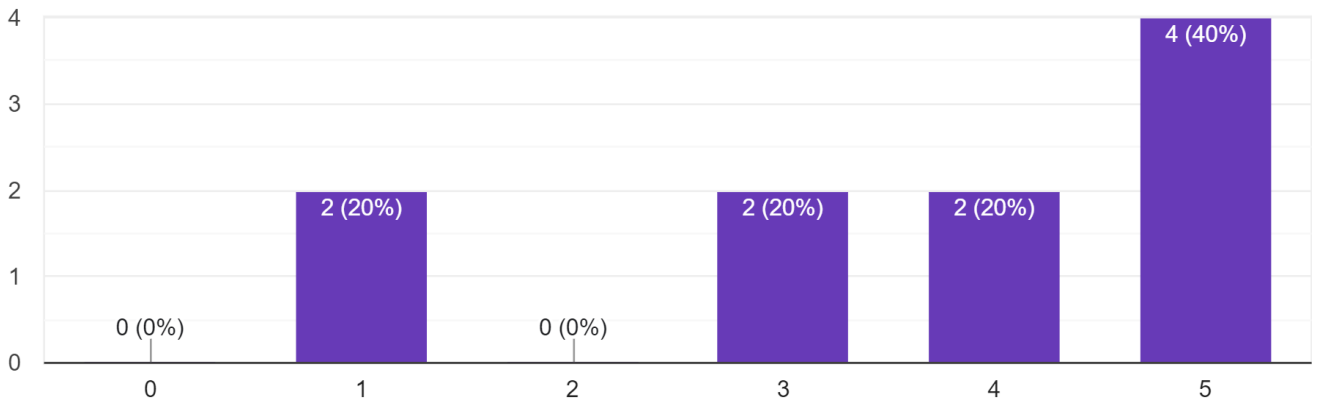


Figure 5: Representation of Convenience of online shopping to customers

According to the respondents, about 40% of customers feel that the online shopping process has been convenient to them despite the problems of scammers and the digital divide. While 20% of the respondents feel that online shopping has been less convenient, the majority feel that online shopping is more convenient. The vote is 0 for the consumers who feel that online shopping has been the least convenient and disappointing experience.

6. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you agree that e-commerce sites are useful to you?

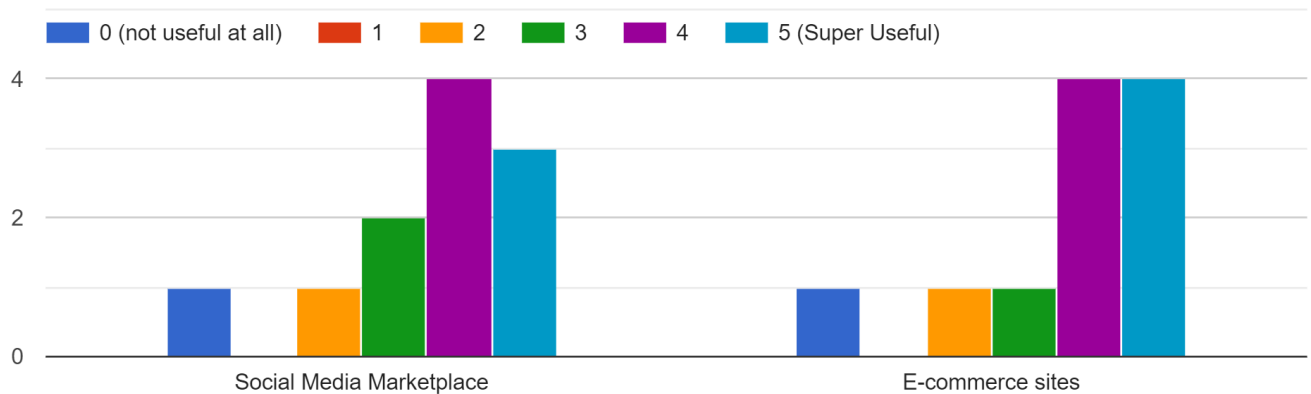


Figure 6: Representation of e-commerce sites usefulness to customers

According to the respondents, many respondents feel that the social media marketplace and e-commerce sites are useful. Majority of respondents have voted that e-commerce site are indeed useful and so is social media marketplace.

7. On the scale of 1-5, rate the things that matters to you in online shopping.

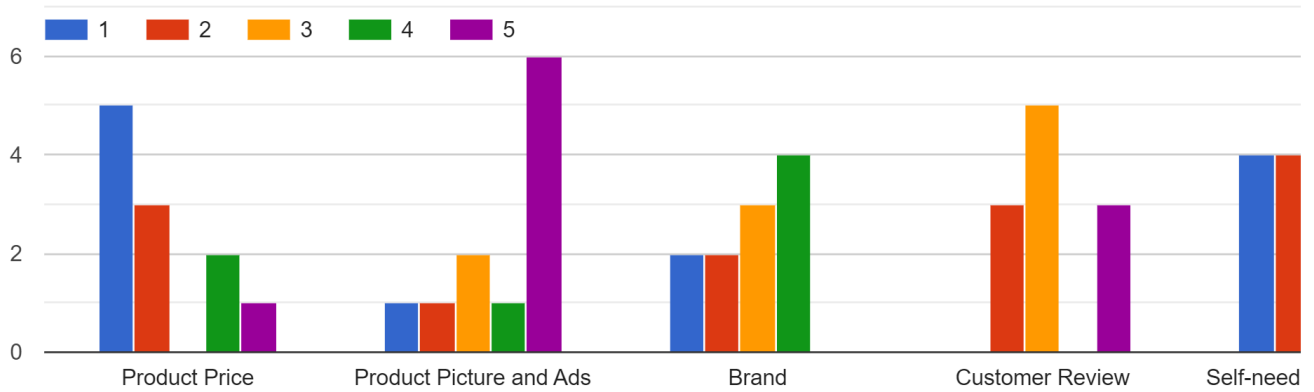


Figure 7: Representation of factors that matters to customer while online shopping.

According to the respondents, the product price is the most important factor that matters in online shopping, as it is a priority to most of the respondents. Similarly, the need for the product is the second important factor for online shopping; the customer review of the product comes after that, while the brand comes after that, and the picture and ads of the product are the last things that matter to the customer while making a purchase.

8. On a scale of 1-5 rate how much does digital marketing affect your purchasing?

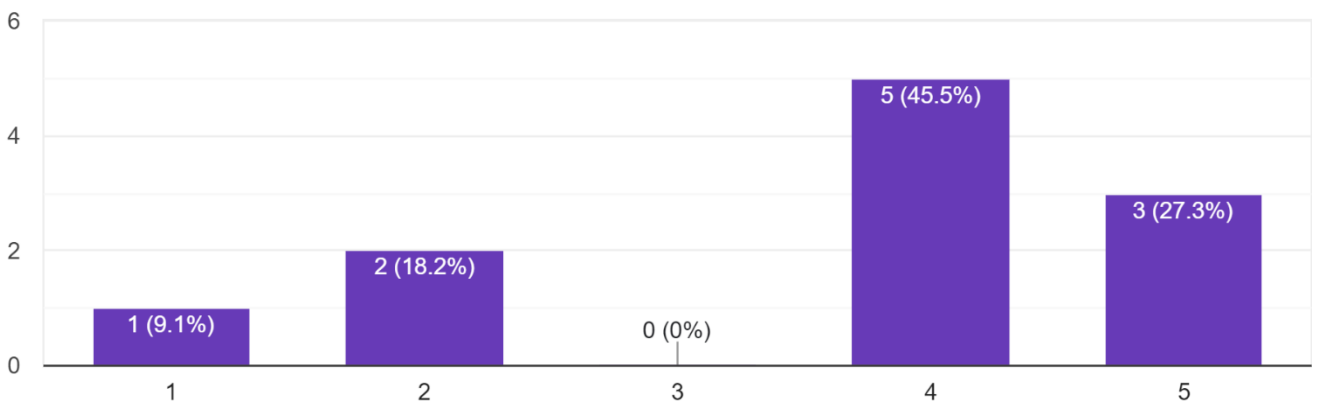


Figure 8: Representation of the digital marketing on the customer purchasing

According to the respondents, 45.5% of the respondents feel that digital marketing indeed affects purchasing and rated 4 in the chart. 27.3% of respondents feel that digital marketing highly influences purchasing decision, while only 9.1% of respondents feel that digital marketing doesn't affect purchasing decision.

9. Do you interact with customer support of a brand?

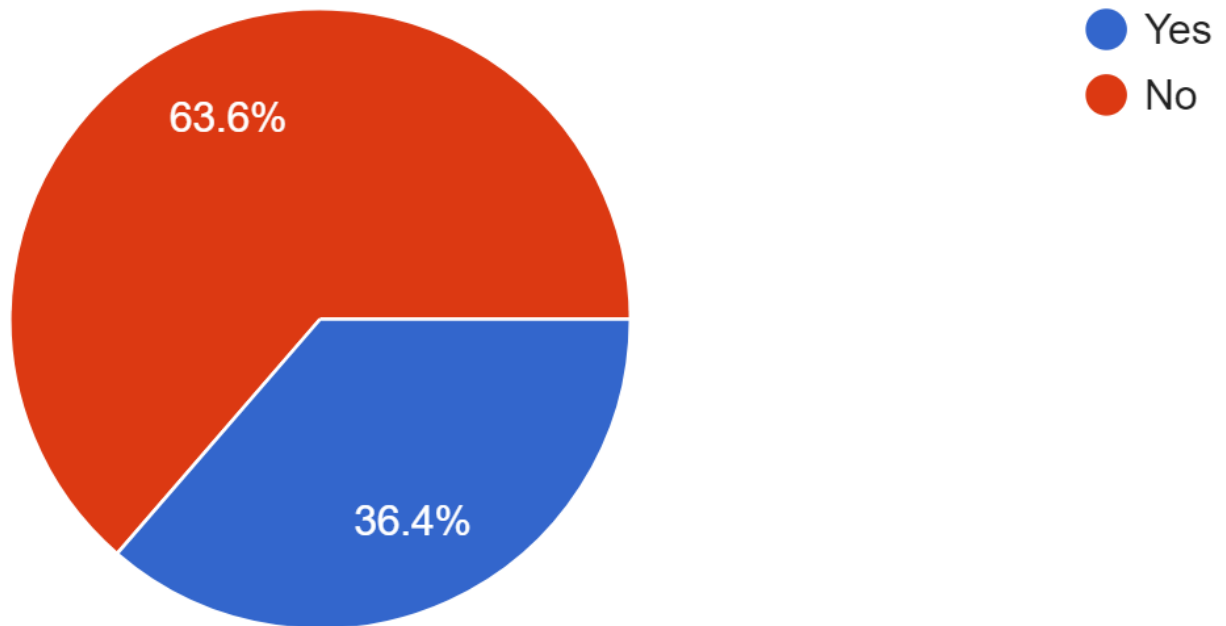


Figure 9: Representation of the customers interaction with customer support of a brand

According to the respondents, 63.6% of the respondents do not interact with the customer support of a brand on social media or e-commerce sites, while 36.4% of the respondents do so. Most of the respondents do not interact with the customer support of the brand.

10. Do you follow the social media of a brand for updates?

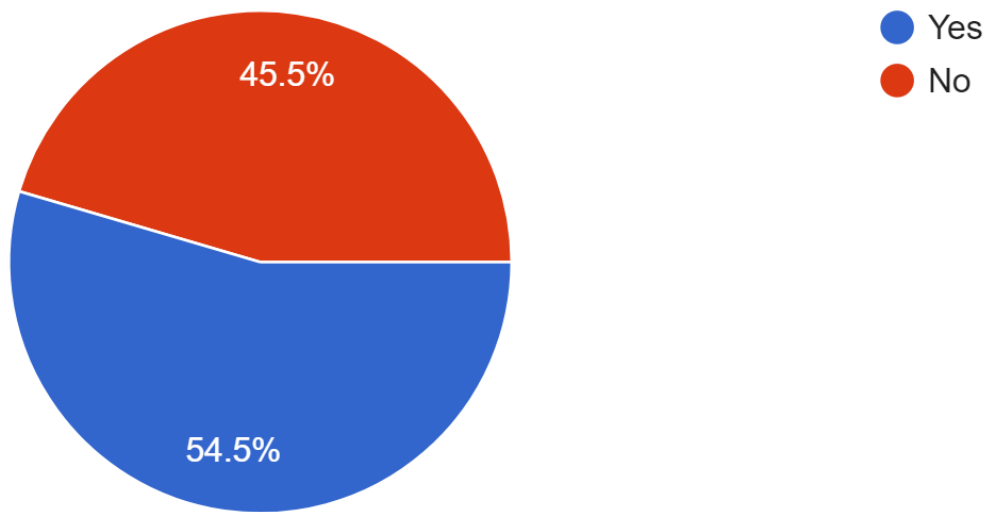


Figure 10: Representation of the customers who follow brand social media for updates.

According to the respondents, 54.5% of the respondents say that they follow the social media pages of the brands, while 45.5% of the respondents don't follow the brands social media handles for updates. Most of the respondents keep updated on brand activities and products through the social media pages.

11. Have you ever bought products being influenced by the online advertisement?

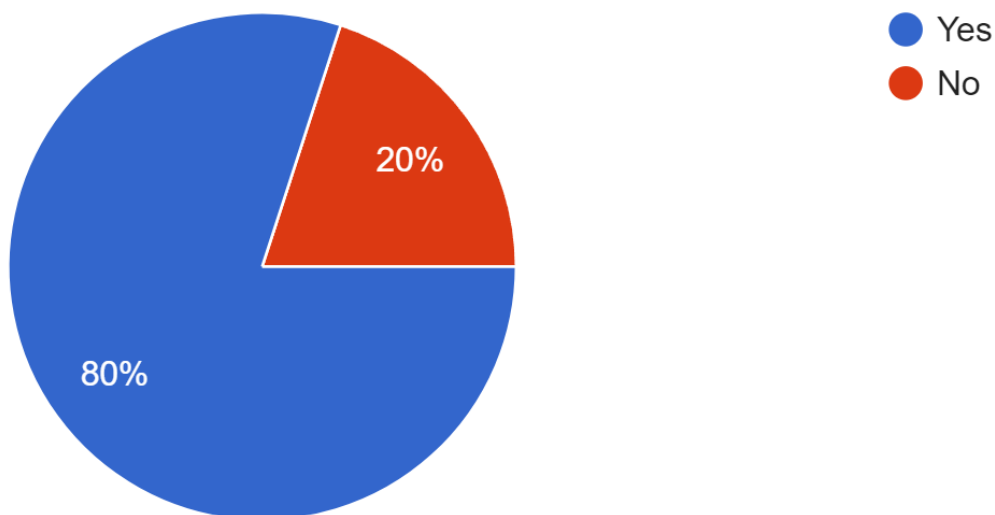


Figure 11: Representation of the customers who bought being influenced by online ads

According to the respondents, 80% of the respondents have made purchases being influenced by online advertisements, while 20% of the respondents have not. The data shows that the online advertisements indeed have an effect on the customers decision making about product purchases.

12. Do you feel safe doing online transaction in online shopping?

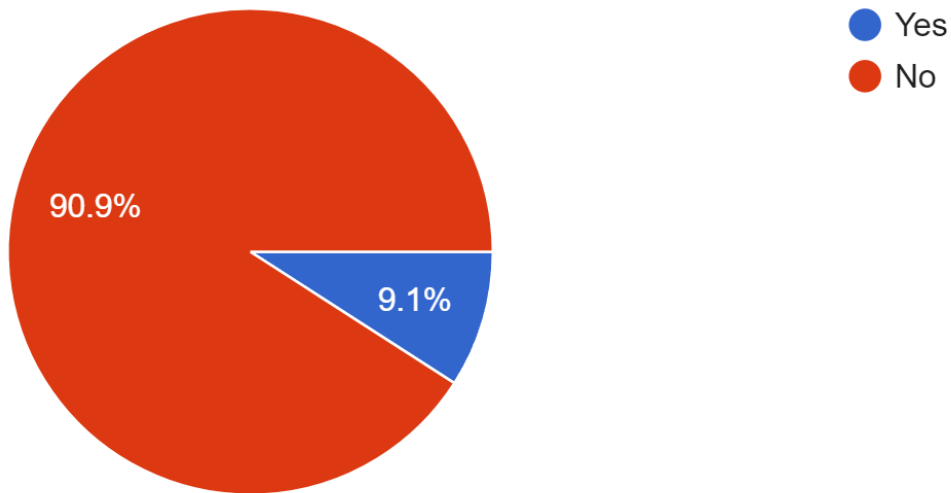


Figure 12: Representation of customers who feel safe during online transaction.

According to the respondents, 90.9% of the participants feel that they do not feel safe while doing online shopping transactions. That may be the reason that the culture of cash at delivery for the purchases we make online in Nepalese society.

13. Have you faced any issues in online transaction during online shopping?

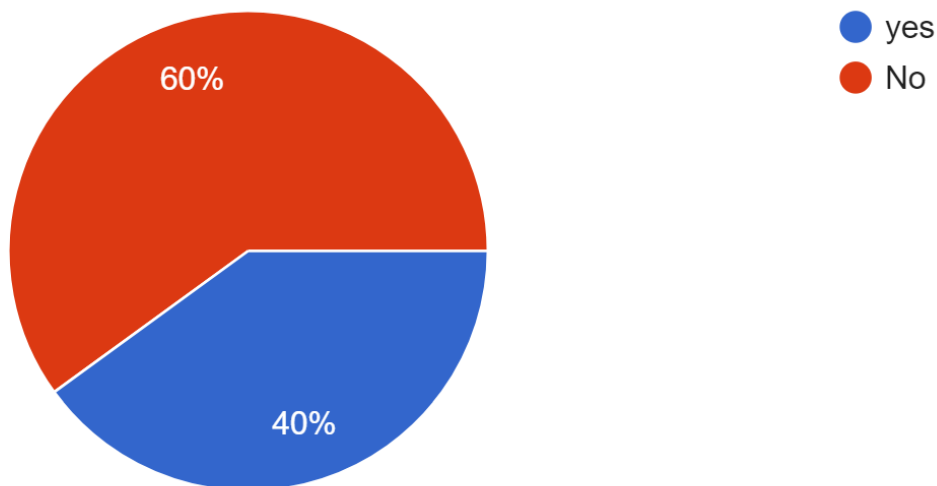


Figure 13: Representation of the customers who faced an issue during online shopping.

According to the respondents, 40% of the participants have faced an issue during online shopping while 60% of the participants have not faced any issues. Online transaction may lead to scams and even the leakage of private information on the internet.

14. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you agree with the following statement? Online shipping is

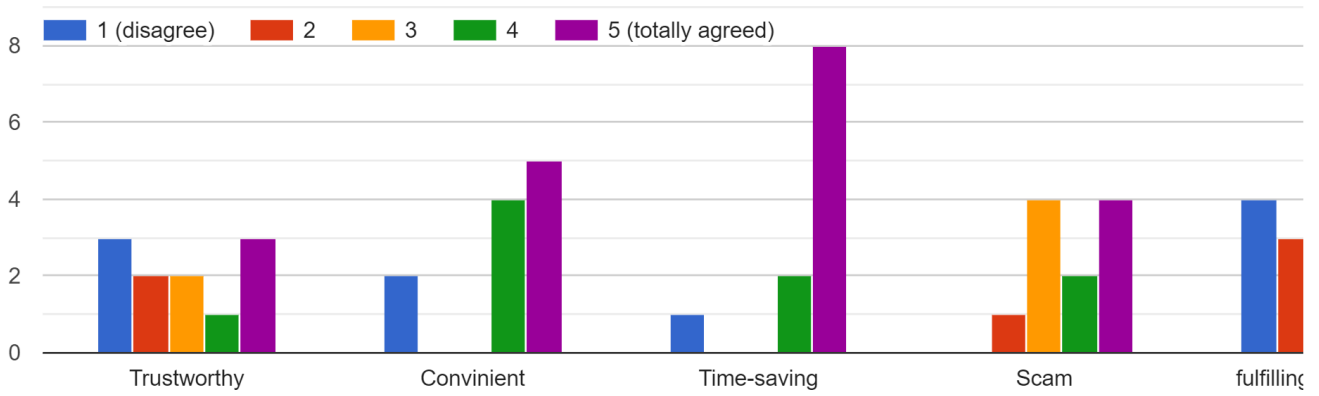


Figure 14: Representation of customers opinion on online shopping.

According to the respondents, participants felt that online shopping is time-saving and convenient, while it is less trustworthy process and the experience is less fulfilling than physical shopping. Also, there is always a chance that customers might get scammed.

15. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you agree with the following statement? Traditional shopping is

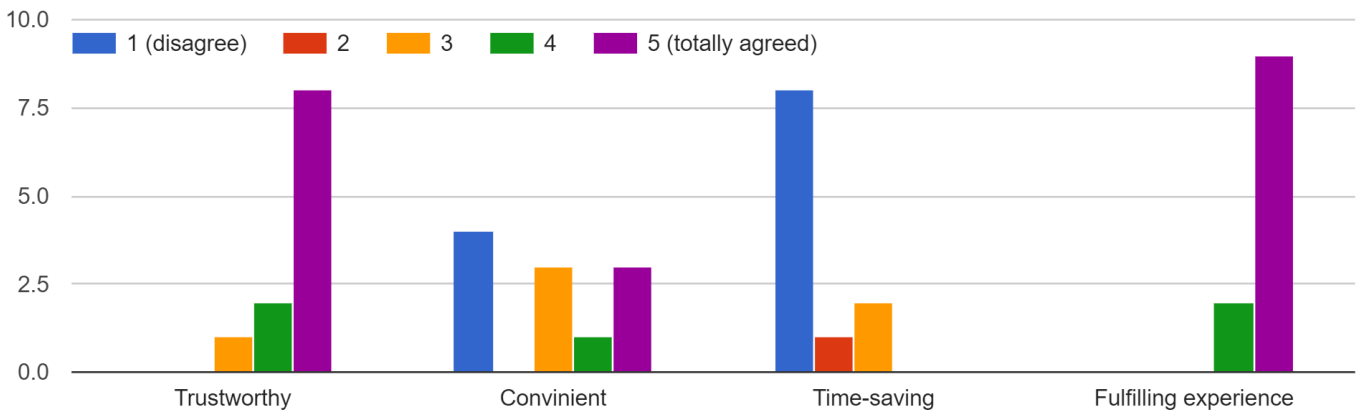


Figure 15: Representation of customers view on traditional shopping.

According to the respondents, participants feel that traditional shopping is more of a trustworthy and fulfilling experience, while it is not convenient and time-saving.

16. What mode of shopping do you prefer more?

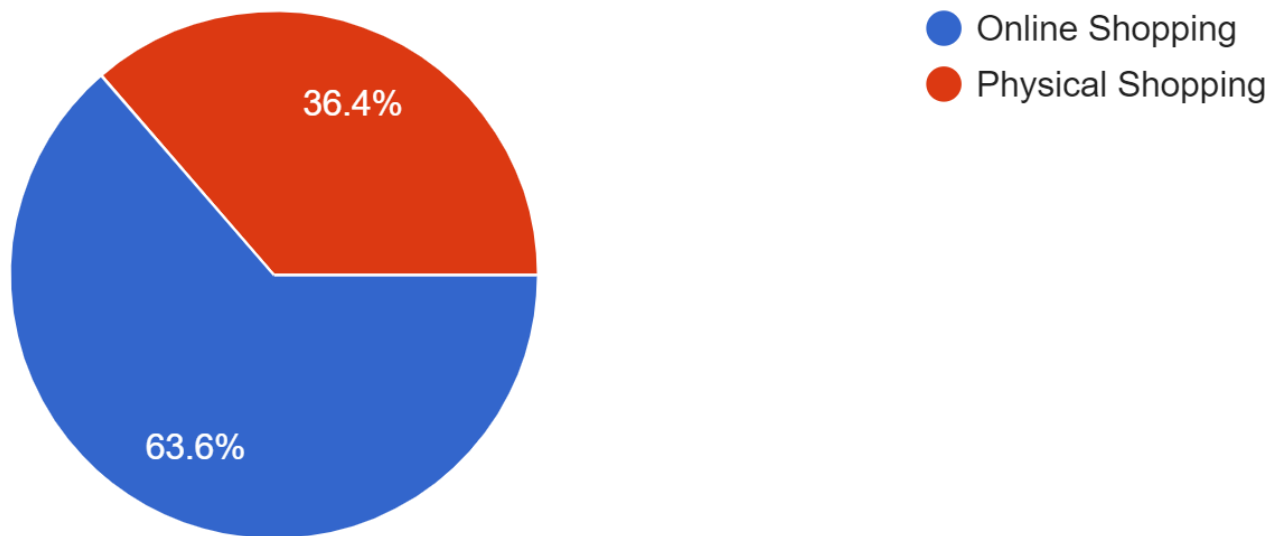


Figure 16: Representation of customer's choice between online and physical shopping.

According to the respondents, 63.6% of the participants chose online shopping over physical shopping while 36.4% chose physical shopping, as their preference. The data shows that the majority the people like to shop online due to its convenience, and time saving factor.

4.4.2 Factors affecting the online shopping experience of customers.

The investigation of factors impacting consumer decision-making at Nepal's Mantra Craft Store required a thorough approach to data collection and analysis. To acquire a varied range of insights regarding customer behaviour in the online buying environment, a mixed-methods technique was used. Survey questionnaires were issued to Mantra Craft's customer base to acquire quantitative data, which included demographic information, shopping habits, and satisfaction levels. This quantitative method aided in the gathering and statistical analysis of consumer preferences, allowing the detection of patterns and trends in online shopping activities.

Furthermore, qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were used to acquire nuanced viewpoints on cultural influences, product quality perceptions, and the overall online shopping experience at Mantra Craft. These qualitative insights provided a more in-depth grasp of the complexities behind consumer decision-making processes, providing rich narratives and contextual explanations that quantitative data alone could not provide. The combination of quantitative and qualitative

data enabled a full investigation of the various elements influencing consumer decisions within the unique environment of Mantra Craft in Nepal's online retail ecosystem.

4.4.3 Interviews with Mantra Handicraft Stakeholder

In an interview with the owner of the Mantra Craft store, Mr. Mahendra Dhamala, he mentioned that he was passionate about Buddhist arts and handicrafts from a young age. Pilgrims like Swayambhunath, Boudhanath, and Buddha Park were the main sources of inspiration, which contained volumes of artistic works, architects, sculptures, and statues that had a magnificent glow and unrealistic shapes. Then he wanted to spread Nepalese art around the world and started his journey as a statue maker. Soon he realised that there was a huge market for Nepalese-style statues and architecture and people from all over the world appreciated the works of Nepalese craftsmen. Since the world has been going all digital, he and his friends started Mantra Craft in the hope of reaching people from all around the world with his statues and designs. Thus, the Mantra Craft store website was officially launched, with premade designs available and with available and the option of customising and ordering the desired design.

The interview with marketing executive Laxman Dhamala had a similar story to the founder as well. Laxman Dhamala, after his brothers-initiated e-commerce website for handicrafts, utilised his technological knowledge to support the owner, Mahendra the on the journey to create Mantra Craft store. Combining his love for the designs and with his knowledge of technology and social media, the Mantra store was formed and has been operating till to date. As a marketing executive, he believes that his role is to understand the needs of the customers while also making sure that each of the product has the style of Nepalese craftsmanship, which will help to uplift the Nepalese architecture and statue-making industry internationally.

Shree Krishna Poudyal, the freight executive of the Mantra Craft store, shares that most of the clients of the store are from foreign countries. Mantra Crafts clients are mostly European, and the order usually comes from countries like the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, etc. There are also some Nepali clients who come to our store to buy our products, but most of the products are shipped outside of the country with online ordering and pre-payment plans. So as a freight executive, I need to make sure that the ordered items are safely, timely, and satisfactorily reaching the customers so they can have a good shopping experience.

5 FINDINGS

With my research, interviews, and study of published papers, I have some findings relating to the factors that influence consumer decision-making in online shopping. The findings are discussed below:

5.1 Mantra Handicraft Overview

Mantracraftstore.com is an online marketplace for Nepalese handicrafts that offers premium handicrafts from Nepal all over the world. It offers you a comfortable online purchasing experience. Handicrafts from Nepal are widely known for preserving traditional traditions, religious beliefs, and the essence of beauty. Mantra Handicrafts, also known as Mantra Craft Store, is a dynamic and imaginative business committed to promoting both traditional and modern handicrafts. Their talented artisans create one-of-a-kind, magnificent creations that pay homage to the diverse cultural history of the places they work in. They specialise in a wide variety of handcrafted goods, such as metalwork, woodworking, singing bowls, ritual objects, and Tibetan Buddhist statues.

They encourage sustainability by responsibly collecting their products, providing a beneficial effect on the natural world as well as local communities. At Mantra Handicrafts Art, it is said that they prioritise quality craftsmanship, awareness of detail, and the preservation of traditional techniques. The mission is to provide customers with one-of-a-kind, morally made art items that not only produce art pieces that display remarkable ability but also help preserve traditional crafts.

5.2 Decision Factors

The optimal services and delivery conditions offered influence a consumer's decision-making process (Bauerova, 2018). The decision-making process that leads people to choose products in online stores as their favourite online shopping location in Nepal is influenced by a variety of variables (Liyanaage & Wijesundara, 2020). Among these deciding factors is the appeal of real Nepalese handicrafts steeped in cultural history. Customers are drawn to Mantra Craft because of its artisanal products that represent Nepal's rich cultural heritage, making the purchase an experience that goes beyond a simple transaction. Handicrafts' authenticity and originality serve as appealing triggers, enticing consumers looking for distinctive and traditional objects that represent the spirit of Nepalese artistry.

Also, consumers' decisions to shop at online stores are strengthened by the platform's commitment to fair trade standards and ethical sourcing, in addition to the attractiveness of cultural authenticity (Veybi-tha & Darta, 2023). Today's aware consumer craves transparency and ethical production processes, and Mantra Craft's commitment to helping local craftspeople and ensuring fair remuneration connects well with these principles. Generating trust is one of the most critical and essential factors for the e-shopping business (Thakur, 2023). This ethical dimension intertwined with the purchase process elevates the importance of consumers' choices, contributing to a sense of purposeful shopping that extends beyond the acquisition of goods, making their patronage at Mantra Craft a conscious decision aligned with ethical considerations and cultural appreciation.

5.2.1 Product Quality and Pricing

The products in the Mantra Craft store are premium products. They can easily range from a couple thousand to a million rupees. Since statue artefacts are considered luxury items, they are only preferred by people with high incomes and high-class families for pleasure and decoration. In the present context, the statue with the lowest is 70 \$ and the statue with the highest price is \$5000. The store has also extended into Nepali handicraft products such as singing bowls, handmade slippers, Tibetan furniture tables, Tibetan prayer wheels, Burmese gongs, etc. The customer review indicates that the quality of the products is premium and satisfactory. Shree Krishna Poudyal (Freight Executive) mentions that there has hardly been any complaint about the quality or the price of the products.

The pricing is quite high if it was targeted to the Nepalese market and buyer, but since the whole store is focused on targeting international customers and markets through digital marketing, the price is normal for the foreign audience, and they also appreciate the artwork of the Nepalese craftsmen for making such amazing works. The products are used as decorative items for houses, restaurants, hotels, and offices, and they are symbol of God for people who are devoted to the Buddhist religion.

5.2.2 Trustworthiness and User Experience

Trustworthiness and user experience are critical factors in shaping consumers' decisions to shop at Mantra Craft, particularly when it comes to online purchasing. For consumers navigating e-commerce platforms, establishing trust in the digital environment is critical (Singh, 2021). Mantra Craft's focus on

secure transactions, transparent policies, and dependable customer service encourages consumer trust. The platform's commitment to delivering accurate product descriptions, high-quality photos, and genuine user reviews helps to increase the trustworthiness of the products and the overall purchasing experience. Furthermore, the platform's emphasis on secure payment gateways and data security safeguards satisfies consumers' concerns about online transactions, encouraging confidence and sustaining trust.

Furthermore, there are five factors that influence consumers legitimate return behaviour, including impulsiveness, desire for uniqueness, product compatibility, perceived risk, and social group influence (Pei & Paswan, 2018). Also, the user experience provided by Mantra Craft has a big impact on consumer decisions. The straightforward interface, fluid navigation, and visually appealing design all contribute to a user-friendly experience that increases engagement and encourages longer interactions. The responsiveness of the website across several devices, combined with clear and straightforward product categorization, simplifies the browsing and selection process for customers. Furthermore, features like wish lists, tailored suggestions, and simple checkout processes contribute to a streamlined user experience, ensuring consumer ease and happiness when discovering and purchasing handicrafts from Mantra Craft in Nepal's online marketplace.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

After learning the primary responses and secondary data of the study, I have reached several conclusions. The findings leading to such conclusions are discussed in the paragraphs below:

The examination of the variables affecting consumers' choices when they purchase online, especially in relation to the Mantra Craft Store in Nepal, has revealed a complex web of variables impacting consumer behaviour. Consumer preferences and decisions are influenced by a combination of psychological factors, technological improvements, and cultural influences. This study demonstrated the significant influence of Nepal's rich cultural legacy on consumer choices for Mantra Craft's artisan goods. The way that cultural values and online shopping experiences interact highlights how important it is to match e-commerce strategy with cultural sensitivity to effectively serve customers in this market.

Furthermore, technological aspects became significant considerations in determining how Mantra Craft's online buying experience was shaped. The platform's usability, security, and safe payment channels all had a big impact on user confidence and participation. The research emphasises how crucial it is to keep up with technological advancements and prioritise user-centric design in order to improve the entire online buying experience. The investigation also examined the phase of post-purchase evaluation, highlighting the crucial impact this phase has in determining customer satisfaction and loyalty. The post-purchase phase is a critical area for improvement within the Mantra Craft Store, as it is crucial for building confidence and guaranteeing repeat purchases to address disparities between customer expectations and the given experience.

Moreover, the study's consequences surpass Mantra Craft's boundaries, offering perspectives that are relevant to Nepal's wider e-commerce domain. Online retailers who want to connect with customers and build long-lasting relationships must prioritise post-purchase experiences, optimise technology interfaces, and understand and capitalise on cultural differences. This thesis establishes the foundation for further research aimed at improving online purchasing experiences in Nepal's heterogeneous cultural environment. It also provides a guide for improving consumer happiness and decision-making in the ever-changing electronic commerce space.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire aims to gather insights into the factors influencing consumer decision-making at Mantra Craft Store, focusing on aspects of authenticity, user experience, and trustworthiness in the online shopping landscape. The data collected are solely for academic purposes and your personal details are kept to a minimum and will not be shared for any other purposes than this study.

For Owner/Management:

1. Briefly describe the core values and vision of Mantra Craft for representing Nepalese handicrafts online.
2. What strategies or practices has Mantra Craft employed to ensure the authenticity and preservation of traditional Nepalese craftsmanship in its offerings?
3. How does Mantra Craft prioritise and enhance the user experience on its online platform to engage and satisfy customers?
4. What measures or protocols does Mantra Craft implement to establish trust and reliability in online transactions for customers?
5. From your perspective, what are the primary factors influencing consumer decisions to shop at Mantra Craft, and how have these evolved over time?

For Staff:

1. How do you perceive the significance of authenticity and cultural heritage in the products offered by Mantra Craft in influencing customer preferences?
2. What steps or initiatives have you observed being taken by Mantra Craft to maintain trust and credibility in its online transactions?
3. In your opinion, how does Mantra Craft ensure a seamless and user-friendly online shopping experience for customers?
4. From your interactions with customers, what factors seem to significantly impact their decision-making when shopping at Mantra Craft?
5. What challenges or obstacles, if any, have you encountered in meeting the evolving demands and expectations of consumers in the online retail space?

APPENDIX 2/1

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire aims to gather insights into the factors influencing consumer decision-making at Mantra Craft Store, focusing on aspects of authenticity, user experience, and trustworthiness in the online shopping landscape. The data collected are solely for academic purposes and your personal details are kept to a minimum and will not be shared any other purposes than for this study.

For Customers:

1. What influenced your decision to choose Mantra Craft for purchasing Nepalese handicrafts online?
2. How would you rate the trustworthiness and authenticity of the products and services offered by Mantra Craft based on your experiences?
3. Describe your user experience while navigating and making purchases on the Mantra Craft website or platform.
4. What specific elements or factors play a significant role in your decision-making process when purchasing from Mantra Craft? (e.g., product descriptions, reviews, payment security, etc.)
5. Have you faced any challenges or encountered issues during your interactions or purchases at Mantra Craft? If so, how were these addressed by the platform's support or customer service team?

APPENDIX 2/2**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE****AN ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS THAT INFLUNCE CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING IN ONLINE SHOPPING**

This questionnaire aims to gather insights into the factors influencing consumer decision-making at Mantra Craft Store, focusing on aspects of authenticity, user experience, and trustworthiness in the online shopping landscape. The data collected are solely for academic purposes and your personal details are kept to a minimum and will not be shared any other purposes than for this study.

Name

Age

- 16-20
- 20-24
- 24-28
- 28-32
- 32-36
- 36-40
- 40 above

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Other:

Occupation:

Online Shopping Overview:

How often do you shop online?

- Once a week
- Once every month
- Depends upon the need.
- I don't shop online.

On a scale of 1 to 5, how often do you visit online shops?

- 0 (Not at all)
- 1
- 2
- 3

- 4
- 5 (Very frequent)

On a scale of 1-5, How likely you are to trust a brand and products that is present in following channels?

1 (Unlikely) 2 3 4 5 (Likely)

Social Media

Website

Physical Shop

Social Media

Website

Physical Shop

On a scale of 1-5, How convenient has online shopping been your experience?

- 0 (Inconvenient)
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (Super Convenient)

On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you agree that e-commerce sites are useful to you?

0 (not useful at all) 1 2 3 4 5 (Super Useful)

Social Media Marketplace

E-commerce sites

Social Media Marketplace

E-commerce sites

On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you agree that online shopping in following platforms can be risky in your experience.

1 (Very Risky) 2 3 4 5 (Safe)

Social Media

Websites

Social Media

Websites

On the scale of 1-5, rate the things that matters to you in online shopping.

1 2 3 4 5

Product Price

Product Picture and Ads

Brand

Customer Review

Self-need for the product

On a scale of 1-5 rate how much does digital marketing affect your purchasing?

- 1 (doesn't affect)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (affects strongly)

Do you interact with customer support of a brand?

- Yes
- No

Do you follow the social media of a brand for updates?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever bought products being influenced by the online advertisement?

- Yes
- No

Do you feel safe doing online transaction in online shopping?

- Yes
- No

Have you faced any issues in online transaction during online shopping?

- yes
- No

On a scale of 1-5, how good online shopping experience has been to you?

- 1 (Bad)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (Very good)

On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you agree with the following statement?

Online shipping is.

1 (disagree) 2 3 4 5 (totally agreed)

Trustworthy

Convenient

Timesaving

Scam

fulfilling experience

On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you agree with the following statement?

Traditional shopping is

1 (disagree) 2 3 4 5 (totally agreed)

Trustworthy

Convenient

Timesaving

Fulfilling experience

What mode of shopping do you prefer more?

- Online Shopping
- Physical Shopping

Any more comments or suggestions?

Thank you for your participation!!!