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The review of the Ph.D. Thesis of

Shahriar Jeddy, M.A.
titled „Factors Influencing Merchandise Online Shopping:
The Mediating Role of Trust”

Supervised by:
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1. Formal information

This review of the doctoral dissertation by Shahriar Jeddy, M.A., is based on a letter dated March 30, 2026, from Agata Sudolska, Ph.D., Professor at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and Chair of the Scientific Discipline Council for Management and Quality Sciences, which, in accordance with Resolution No. 44N/2025/2026 of the Scientific Discipline Council for Management and Quality Sciences at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń dated March 18, 2026, requests that the evaluation in question be conducted. The legal basis is Article 187 of the Act of July 20, 2018, on Higher Education and Science, which specifies the following conditions:

1. “The doctoral dissertation demonstrates the candidate’s general theoretical knowledge in the discipline or disciplines and the ability to independently conduct scientific or artistic work.
2. The subject of the doctoral dissertation is an original solution to a scientific problem, an original application of the results of the candidate’s own scientific research in the economic or social sphere, or an original artistic achievement.
3. A doctoral dissertation may take the form of a written work, including a scientific monograph, a collection of published and thematically related scientific articles, a design, engineering, technological, implementation, or artistic project, as well as an independent and distinct section of a collective work.
4. A doctoral dissertation must be accompanied by an abstract in English; a doctoral dissertation prepared in a foreign language must also be accompanied by an abstract in Polish. If the doctoral dissertation is not a written work, it must be accompanied by a description in Polish and English.

The subject of this review is a monograph titled “Factors Influencing Merchandise Online Shopping: The Mediating Role of Trust,” prepared in English, with a total length of 195 pages, including: a title page, table of contents, abstracts in English and Polish, an introduction (9 pages), the main body of the text (127 pages), divided into five chapters with the following lengths: 10, 35, 27, 45, and 11 pages, respectively; a bibliography (21 pages); and a list of figures, tables, equations, and appendices (26 pages). I find the length of the work typical and the content structure appropriate for a Ph.D. thesis.

The monograph draws on approximately 280 references, most of which are scientific articles published in English. The bibliography also includes two publications authored by Shahriar Jeddy and published in 2022 and 2024.

The thesis meets editorial and proofreading standards. Numerous figures and tables significantly aid understanding of the author’s line of reasoning.

In formal terms, the thesis by Shahriar Jeddy, M.A., meets the requirements specified in paragraphs 3 and 4 of Article 187 of the Law on Higher Education and Science.

2. Selection of the research problem and its originality

The selection of the dissertation problem is highly relevant given the ongoing structural transformation of retailing. Online shopping has become a mainstream component of contemporary commerce, accounting for approximately one-fifth of global retail sales and continuing to expand, even though its growth rate has recently slowed (eMarketer, 2026). This makes the investigation of factors influencing online purchasing decisions timely and important from both academic and managerial perspectives.

The focus on trust is particularly justified because online shopping entails greater uncertainty than traditional retail, given the lack of direct product inspection, the spatial distance between buyer and seller, and reliance on digital interfaces, payment systems, delivery providers, and return procedures. Therefore, examining trust as a mediating construct enables a more nuanced explanation of how consumers translate perceptions, attitudes, and evaluations into actual or intended purchasing behavior.

The dissertation addresses a research problem at the intersection of three significant fields: e-commerce, consumer behavior, and marketing. By adopting the consumer perspective, it moves beyond analyzing digital retail channels as purely technological or transactional systems and focuses on the determinants of consumer decision-making in online environments. This approach is cognitively valuable, as it contributes to a better understanding of how consumers perceive, evaluate, and engage with online shopping opportunities.

Therefore, I find Shahriar Jeddy, M.A.'s research problem both timely and significant, offering valuable insights for academic research and managerial practice.

3. Research Framework

The main purpose of this study is to identify and investigate the factors that influence online merchandise shopping. Alongside the main aim, the author has set nine sub-objectives linked to specific research questions and hypotheses. While the main objective is well-defined, I would avoid presenting numerous fragmented cognitive sub-objectives that directly refer to sub-questions and hypotheses. Instead, more comprehensive cognitive objectives would be better—for example, focusing on attitude, social norms, and consumer behavior, as outlined in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) used in the study. Additionally, it is important to clearly specify methodological objectives, such as developing a model of factors affecting online purchases, designing measurement models for individual components, and illustrating the relationships within the structural equation model (SEM). Finally, practical objectives for e-commerce managers are worth including.

The study's purpose is presented along with a series of questions, comprising two primary questions and ten sub-questions that mirror the hypotheses. While it's not methodologically wrong to design research sub-questions as direct equivalents of the hypotheses, this approach somewhat diminishes the analytical depth of the questions. Clarifying the distinct roles—problem-oriented for research questions and theory-driven for hypotheses—would improve the study's transparency and methodological robustness. Following Czakon (2021), hypotheses should primarily stem from the conceptual and theoretical framework rather than simply restating the research questions.

This observation is particularly noteworthy because the author demonstrates a sound understanding of hypothesis development in Chapter 2. The hypotheses are appropriately grounded in the literature review and logically derived from the theoretical and conceptual framework. Consequently, the concerns raised here relate not to the substantive quality of the hypothesis development itself, but rather to the way the relationship between the research questions and hypotheses is presented in the introductory section of the dissertation. A more precise methodological articulation at this stage would better reflect the rigor evident in the subsequent theoretical chapters and would further strengthen the overall coherence of the research design.

Furthermore, the inclusion of a main hypothesis may warrant further consideration. Czakon (2021) does not recommend formulating a general hypothesis and then decomposing it into detailed hypotheses, because the main hypothesis may not fully and accurately encompass all dimensions addressed by the subsidiary hypotheses, as in this study. For this reason, methodological clarity is often better served by focusing on a coherent set of specific, theoretically grounded hypotheses directly linked to the conceptual model and the empirical testing procedure.

Finally, given the nature of the research problem, the research objective, and the research questions derived from it, Shahriar Jeddy, M.A. appropriately adopted a quantitative research approach within the positivist paradigm. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), he developed a structural equation model (SEM) and designed a survey instrument with measurement scales for the constructs under investigation. The instrument underwent content

validity assessment and reliability testing. Empirical data were subsequently collected and analyzed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). This enabled evaluation of the measurement and structural models, followed by mediation analysis. The presentation of results is complemented by a discussion and conclusions that are consistent with the analyses conducted.

Despite the minor comments and suggestions presented above, I consider the research design coherent and methodologically robust. The dissertation presents an original approach to the research problem and is characterized by a logical, well-structured research process grounded in sound theoretical and substantive foundations. Thus, I conclude that the dissertation meets the criteria specified in point 2, Article 187 of the Act of 20 July 2018 on Higher Education and Science.

4. Thesis Structure and Value

A notable strength of the dissertation is its clear, logical development, grounded in solid substantive and theoretical foundations. Its structure, research-stage sequence, and presentation of findings are well-aligned with the research objectives and effectively address the research problem. Consequently, the study generates knowledge with the potential to make a significant contribution to the Management and Quality Sciences.

Mr. Jeddy's dissertation consists of five chapters. It is organized around a theory-based approach, followed by research methodology and empirical evidence. The first two chapters are epistemological and conceptual in nature. They are followed by two empirical chapters that present the method, results, and data analysis. The last chapter offers the discussion and conclusions. Below, I present my brief comments on each chapter.

Chapter 1 on the theoretical framework discusses the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which examines how users adopt new technology, and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which explains individuals' intentions behind their actions. Additionally, it introduces trust as a mediator in the online shopping context. It is brief but provides the background needed to design the SEM model for empirical research.

Chapter 2 is titled "Literature Review" and starts with the presentation of the research context, which is an e-commerce business. While it provides a useful epistemological and conceptual foundation for the study and appropriately introduces the theoretical background of consumer behavior, I would have expected a more in-depth engagement with the specific nature of online shopping, particularly given the dissertation's focus on merchandise online shopping and the mediating role of trust. In my opinion, the literature review would benefit from an update (it ends in 2022), including not only open-access articles available online (p. 51, 61) but also a clearer delineation of the study's object, scope, and contextual boundaries.

First, the dissertation does not sufficiently clarify whether the analysis concerns products, services, or both. This distinction is important, as the title refers to "merchandise", which usually implies goods, whereas a few survey questions (p. 169-172) and answers to them appear to address services as well (Table 4-14, 4-15, p. 100-101). If products are the primary focus of

analysis, it would be useful to specify whether they are physical or digital. For physical goods such as electronics, clothing, and food, delivery conditions, delivery reliability, delivery costs, return policies, and ease of returns are widely recognized as key determinants of online purchase decisions, alongside price and product-related factors. By contrast, for digital products, such as music and movies, issues such as delivery, returns, fulfillment time, and reverse logistics are either absent or take a substantially different form. Therefore, omitting or underdeveloping these dimensions may limit the conceptual discussion's explanatory power.

Second, the literature review would benefit from a more precise definition of the vendor. It remains unclear whether the vendor (in some parts referred to as an e-vendor, e.g., p. 8) is understood as a production firm, an online retailer, a platform-based seller, or a private individual. This distinction is analytically relevant because it determines whether the study is situated primarily in a B2C or C2C context. Trust formation, perceived risk, information asymmetry, liability, and expectations concerning delivery and after-sales service differ considerably between B2C and C2C transactions. As trust is a central construct in the dissertation, the vendor's institutional and relational characteristics should be presented more explicitly.

Third, the discussion could be strengthened by considering the broader ecosystem of actors involved in online transactions. Online shopping is rarely limited to the dyadic relationship between buyer and seller. Rather, it is co-created by multiple complementary actors, including e-commerce platforms, payment providers, logistics operators, fulfillment service providers, return-management intermediaries, review systems, and technology providers. In this regard, the literature review could draw more explicitly on the concept of complementors, as discussed by Brandenburger and Nalebuff (1997), to explain how third-party actors contribute to the value proposition, perceived reliability, and trustworthiness of online shopping. Such an approach would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of trust not only as a buyer-vendor relationship, but also as a phenomenon embedded in a wider digital commerce ecosystem.

Fourth, the chapter would benefit from a clearer discussion of the channels through which consumers are reached and transactions are initiated. The dissertation appears to refer broadly to online shopping, but it is not entirely clear whether the study is limited to traditional e-commerce websites or also includes platform-mediated commerce, mobile commerce, social commerce, live commerce, or voice commerce. These channels differ in terms of consumer interaction, information presentation, immediacy, social influence, perceived risk, and trust mechanisms. For example, trust in a conventional e-commerce website may be shaped by website quality, payment security, delivery options, and return policies, whereas trust in social commerce or live commerce may depend more strongly on social proof, influencer credibility, peer recommendations, or real-time interaction. A clearer delimitation of the channels (omnichannel) under investigation would therefore enhance the study's conceptual precision.

Overall, although the chapter offers a relevant theoretical foundation, the literature review could be made more robust by more explicitly addressing the operational and contextual specificity of online shopping.

Chapter 3 presents the methodological foundations of the study, beginning with a general discussion of research paradigms, research methods, and approaches to reasoning, and then moving to the specific research design and procedure adopted in the dissertation. While the introductory part is relatively broad, it provides an appropriate methodological context for the empirical investigation and demonstrates the author's awareness of alternative research traditions and methodological choices.

In my view, the strongest contribution of this chapter lies in the preparation of the research instrument. The procedures related to survey scale development, content validity, and instrument reliability are well-designed, systematic, and methodologically robust. The author demonstrates considerable care in operationalizing the constructs in the model and ensuring measurement quality, which is particularly important in a study based on latent variables and SEM analysis. Overall, Chapter 3 provides a sound and credible methodological basis for the dissertation's empirical component.

Chapter 4 constitutes the main empirical part of the dissertation and presents the results from two complementary statistical perspectives: descriptive and analytical. The descriptive statistics are used to characterize the sample, particularly the respondents' demographic profile, and to provide the necessary background for understanding the study's empirical setting. The analytical statistics, based on PLS-SEM, constitute the most important component of the chapter, as they are used to evaluate both the measurement and structural models. The use of PLS-SEM is well aligned with the objective of testing complex relationships between latent variables within the proposed conceptual framework. The chapter shows methodological competence in moving from basic sample description to advanced model assessment, including the evaluation of reliability, validity, and structural relationships.

Chapter 5 provides the final evaluation of the adopted hypotheses and presents the theoretical and managerial implications of the study. The chapter fulfills its concluding role by linking the empirical findings to the research objectives and indicating the dissertation's potential contribution to understanding consumer behavior in online shopping. However, in my view, the discussion of both theoretical and managerial implications is rather concise and could be substantially broadened. Given the central role of trust in the dissertation, the author could more explicitly explain how the findings extend existing knowledge on online consumer behavior, trust formation, and purchase decision-making in digital environments. Similarly, the managerial implications would benefit from a more detailed discussion of how online vendors, e-commerce platforms, logistics providers, and other actors involved in the online shopping ecosystem may apply the results in practice.

At the same time, the section devoted to the study's limitations is well considered and demonstrates the author's awareness of the research's boundaries. The author identifies several important limitations, including the use of a sample comprising students from different universities in Poland, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader consumer groups, and the lack of a broader omnichannel perspective, despite its growing relevance in contemporary retailing.

This transparent recognition of methodological and contextual limitations strengthens the credibility of the dissertation and provides a meaningful basis for future research, particularly studies involving more diverse consumer segments, different transaction contexts, and omnichannel shopping environments.

5. Conclusions

My overall evaluation of Shahriar Jeddy, M.A.'s doctoral dissertation titled "Factors Influencing Merchandise Online Shopping: The Mediating Role of Trust," supervised by Rafał Drewniak, Ph.D., Prof. at Nicolaus Copernicus University, is positive. The dissertation demonstrates the candidate's knowledge, ability to define research problems, and capacity to develop original solutions related to factors influencing online shopping. Based on this, I **conclude the dissertation meets all requirements outlined in Article 187 of the Act on Higher Education and Science, and I recommend that Shahriar Jeddy, M.A., be allowed to defend his dissertation publicly.**

(Conclusions in Polish)

Moja ogólna ocena dysertacji doktorskiej Shahriara Jeddy, M.A., pt. "Factors Influencing Merchandise Online Shopping: The Mediating Role of Trust", przygotowanej pod kierunkiem naukowym promotora dr hab. Rafała Drewniaka, prof. UMK, jest pozytywna. Rozprawa dowodzi wiedzy Doktoranta, jego umiejętności formułowania problemów badawczych oraz umiejętności opracowania oryginalnego rozwiązania problemu naukowego dotyczącego rozpoznania i zbadania czynników, które determinują zakupy towarów w Internecie. **W związku z powyższym stwierdzam, że praca doktorska spełnia wszystkie warunki określone w art. 187 ustawy Prawo o Szkolnictwie Wyższym i Nauce oraz wnioskuję o dopuszczenie Shahriara Jeddy, M.A., do jej publicznej obrony.**

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¹ Czakon, W. (2021). Hipotezy i modele badawcze, w: Sułkowski Ł., Lenart-Gansiniec R., Kolasińska-Morawska K.(red.). *Metody badań ilościowych w zarządzaniu*, 73-93.

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