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Review of the doctoral dissertation “Factors Influencing Merchandise Online Shopping: The Mediating Role of Trust” authored by mgr Shahriar Jeddy

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The review has been prepared under the regulations of the Legal Act of 20 July 2018, Law on Higher Education and Science (DZ. U. z 2018 r. poz. 1668 ze zm), according to which:

“Art. 187. 1. A doctoral dissertation shall present the candidate's general theoretical knowledge in a discipline or disciplines and the ability to conduct scientific or artistic work independently.

2. The subject of the doctoral dissertation is an original solution to a scientific problem, an original solution in the field of applying the results of own scientific research in the economic or social sphere, or an original artistic achievement.”

Aim and research problem of the dissertation

The dissertation addresses the issue of factors influencing consumers' online purchasing decisions, with particular attention to the mediating role of trust. The topic is relevant for management and marketing research, especially given the continued growth of e-commerce and the importance of trust in digital transactions. The dissertation aims to identify selected determinants of merchandise online shopping and to examine their relationships using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the main theoretical framework. The choice of the theoretical framework is appropriate for the

topic of the dissertation and confirms that the PhD student possesses the required general knowledge in this area within the discipline of management and quality sciences.

At the same time, the formulation of the research problem and the aim of the dissertation raise some reservations. The declared main objective, to identify factors influencing merchandise online shopping, is rather broad and relatively simple for a doctoral dissertation. What seems to distinguish the dissertation is the mediating role of online trust, yet this aspect is not sufficiently visible in the formulation of its main aim and the initial research questions. The research questions focus mainly on factors influencing online purchasing decisions and on the relative importance of these factors, but they do not explicitly refer to trust, although trust later becomes central in the conceptual model and hypotheses.

Similarly, although the topic is justified and worth undertaking in a doctoral dissertation, it should be noted that the research gap is formulated as the limited use of the full TPB in previous studies of online shopping. This is acceptable as a starting point of the argumentation, but it should have been explained more convincingly why analyzing all TPB-related constructs together is theoretically important and what new understanding such an approach provides. The dissertation would benefit from a clearer explanation of what exactly is added beyond testing already known factors and statistical relationships.

A question that should be addressed by the PhD student is therefore: What is the main scientific contribution of the dissertation beyond identifying statistically significant relationships between selected factors and resulting from the analysis of all TPB-related constructs together?

Despite these reservations, the dissertation identifies a research problem that is relevant, empirically investigable, and located within the field of consumer behavior and e-commerce. Therefore, in my opinion, the minimum requirements concerning the formulation of the aim and research problem are met, although the aim and the problem could have been framed in a more precise and ambitious way.

Structure of the thesis and the general readability

The dissertation consists of five main chapters: theoretical framework, literature review, methodology, results and data analysis, and discussion and conclusion. This general structure is acceptable and covers the main components expected in a doctoral dissertation. The thesis includes a theoretical part, an empirical part, methodological justification, statistical analysis, discussion of results, limitations, and future research

directions. I particularly appreciate the inclusion of the latter two elements, as they indicate the PhD student's ability to critically reflect on the obtained research results.

However, the internal structure of the dissertation is sometimes unusual and not always fully effective. The Introduction does not sufficiently concentrate on the research gap, the importance of the topic, the research problem, and the intended contribution. Instead, it includes elements that are a glossary of concepts and an early discussion of theoretical models. As a result, the reader does not receive a sufficiently clear and concise explanation of the dissertation's contribution at the beginning of the work.

There are also sections that are disproportionately short, such as introductory parts of chapters consisting of only a few sentences. In contrast, some descriptive tables in the empirical chapter are overdeveloped and could have been moved to an appendix or summarized in the main text (e.g., Frequency Table of Home Furnishings, Frequency Table of Empik). For example, several frequency tables concerning particular shopping categories or platforms do not need to be presented one per page in the main body of the dissertation.

The readability of the dissertation is also weakened by language mistakes (e.g., „In Chapter 2, firstly, the evolution of e-commerce as well as the antecedents of rust in the virtual environment discussed.” p. 26), and inconsistent formatting of tables and figures. These problems suggest that the thesis was not sufficiently carefully checked before submission. While they do not invalidate the scientific effort, they negatively affect the professional quality of the dissertation. In a doctoral dissertation, these are not only editorial issues, as they also influence the clarity and credibility of the argument.

Nevertheless, the dissertation remains understandable. The argument can be followed, the research procedure is presented, and the empirical results are reported in a way that allows assessment. Therefore, despite formal and editorial weaknesses, the general structure and readability meet the minimum requirements expected from a doctoral dissertation.

Theoretical background and literature review – general theoretical knowledge in a discipline

The theoretical part demonstrates that the PhD student has acquired the general theoretical knowledge necessary to conduct research in the area of online consumer behavior. The dissertation discusses, among others, the Theory of Reasoned Action, the Technology Acceptance Model, and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The choice of TPB as the main theoretical framework is generally well justified. The dissertation correctly points out that online shopping involves psychological, social,

and behavioral aspects and that TPB enables the analysis of attitudes, social influences, and perceived behavioral control.

The discussion of trust as a mediation mechanism is also one of the stronger elements of the theoretical part. Trust is presented as a reducer of uncertainty and perceived risk in online transactions. The dissertation explains that trust mediates the relationship between selected environmental and transactional attributes and online purchasing behavior. This part shows that the PhD student understands the relevance of trust in e-commerce and is able to connect it with broader behavioral frameworks. This demonstrates the PhD student's general knowledge in this area within the discipline of management and quality sciences.

The literature review is generally sufficient and includes relevant studies on online shopping, e-commerce, trust, and behavioral models. The section on antecedents of trust is reasonably well developed, and the critical analysis of previous studies indicates that the PhD student is able to compare existing research and identify potential gaps.

However, the literature review could have been more up-to-date and more analytical. Some references used in the Introduction are relatively old, and although the dissertation includes literature up to around 2023, the topic of e-commerce has changed rapidly in recent years. It would have been valuable to include more recent studies from 2022–2025, especially given changes in digital platforms, mobile commerce, payment systems, consumer risk perception, and post-pandemic online purchasing habits. Thus, the question is: How have recent changes in e-commerce, especially after 2022, influenced the relevance of trust and the factors analyzed in the dissertation?

The conducted bibliometric analysis is relevant, but it remains rather basic. It relies mainly on visual outputs and counts of terms, while it should have offered a deeper interpretation of thematic clusters, research streams, and specific gaps emerging from them. A more developed bibliometric analysis could have strengthened the theoretical contribution of the dissertation. Therefore, the question is: What exactly do the bibliometric clusters reveal about research gaps, beyond the frequency of selected terms?

Overall, the theoretical part confirms that the PhD student has sufficient general theoretical knowledge in the discipline of management and quality sciences. However, this knowledge is sometimes presented descriptively rather than critically, and the theoretical contribution could have been articulated more clearly.

Method – the ability of the PhD student to conduct independent scientific work

The methodology chapter presents the research approach, research design, sampling, survey development, content validity procedures, reliability testing, and data analysis methods. The dissertation uses a quantitative research design, based on survey data collected among respondents from Polish universities. The empirical study was conducted using an online questionnaire, and the final analysis was based on 304 complete responses. The use of PLS-SEM is appropriate for the type of model tested in the dissertation, even if applied only to a limited extent.

A positive aspect of the methodology is that the PhD student describes the process of measurement scale development and content validity assessment. The use of expert evaluation, CVI, modified Kappa statistics, pilot testing, and Cronbach's alpha reliability assessment shows that the student made an effort to verify the quality of the research instrument. The handling of missing data and outliers is also described, which should be assessed positively. It indicates the ability to conduct independent scientific work.

At the same time, some methodological weaknesses should be noted. Parts of Chapter 3 describe in detail different research approaches and types of research in general, but do not immediately relate them to the student's own study. The discussion is sometimes textbook-like rather than dissertation-specific. It becomes clearer later, especially in the table summarizing the thesis perspective, that the study adopts a positivist, deductive, quantitative, and applied approach.

The most important methodological concern concerns the sample. The study is based mainly on university students, selected through non-probability sampling. The justification provided is that students are easier to access and that young Polish consumers are more familiar with digital applications. This explanation is understandable from a practical perspective, but it raises questions about the scope and generalizability of the findings. If the study focuses on students or younger consumers, this should be reflected more clearly in the title, aim, research problem, research questions, and conclusions. Otherwise, the dissertation overstates its ability to explain online shopping behavior among Polish e-consumers more broadly. A key question is therefore: Why were students selected as the research sample, and to what extent can the results be generalized to online consumers in Poland? Would the findings be different if the sample had included older consumers, non-students, or a more representative group of online shoppers?

Despite the presented limitations, the methodology demonstrates that the PhD student is able to design and conduct an empirical quantitative study, develop a survey instrument, collect data, and apply appropriate statistical methods. Therefore, the dissertation meets the minimum requirement concerning the ability to conduct

independent scientific work, although the methodological justification should have been more precise and more critical.

Empirical analysis – originality of the solution to the scientific problem

The empirical part includes descriptive statistics, measurement model evaluation, structural model evaluation, and mediation analysis. The use of PLS-SEM is appropriate for testing the proposed relationships between constructs. The dissertation clearly reports which hypotheses were supported and which were rejected. It also compares the obtained results with previous studies, which is a positive element of the discussion.

The empirical findings indicate that perceived product awareness and payment transaction safety significantly influence perceived online trust. Online trust, perceived web quality, and past online shopping experience significantly influence online shopping behavior. At the same time, perceived price advantage, social influence, web quality, and past online shopping experience were not found to significantly influence online trust. The mediation analysis shows that online trust plays a mediating role between payment transaction safety and online shopping.

The empirical analysis is correctly conducted at a basic level. The evaluation of the measurement model and structural model is acceptable, and the mediation analysis follows recognized procedures. The results are presented clearly enough to allow interpretation.

However, the originality of the empirical contribution is limited. Many of the findings are not particularly surprising. The conclusion that trust, payment security, website quality, and previous experience matter in online shopping is consistent with existing knowledge. The dissertation would be stronger if it explained more clearly what is unexpected, context-specific, or theoretically meaningful in the obtained results.

There is also a question concerning the implications of rejected hypotheses. If several expected factors did not significantly influence online trust, this deserves deeper theoretical interpretation. The dissertation reports these results, but it could do more to explain why they occurred and what they mean for the conceptual model.

The PhD student should answer the following questions: Which result of the study was the most surprising or theoretically meaningful? What do we know after this study that we did not know before? Another important question is: If several hypothesized relationships were not supported, does this suggest limitations in the conceptual model, in the operationalization of constructs, or in the specific sample used?

The descriptive part of the empirical chapter is rather simple and sometimes too extensive in relation to its analytical value. As already stated, some tables could have been omitted from the main text or moved to appendices. There are also possible issues concerning the questionnaire design. For example, respondents were asked about specific platforms, but then some questions referred to the online shopping experience in general, which may combine very different platforms and experiences. This could introduce bias into the interpretation of satisfaction, trust, and experience.

Another point requiring clarification is the sample description. If the survey was distributed among students, but only 83.6% of respondents were students, it should have explained who the remaining respondents were and how their inclusion affects the analysis.

The dissertation includes limitations and directions for future research, which should be assessed positively. The managerial implications are also generally relevant, especially recommendations concerning payment security, product information, website usability, customer experience, and trust-building strategies.

Overall, despite the reservations presented above, it can be concluded that the empirical analysis provides an original empirical application of a behavioral model with trust as a mediator in the Polish e-commerce context. Even though the originality is moderate rather than strong.

Final opinion

The dissertation “Factors Influencing Merchandise Online Shopping: The Mediating Role of Trust” authored by mgr Shahriar Jeddy, addresses a relevant research topic and demonstrates that the PhD student has acquired sufficient theoretical knowledge in the field of online consumer behaviour, e-commerce, and trust within the discipline of management and quality sciences. The PhD student has also shown the ability to independently design and conduct an empirical quantitative study, including survey development, data collection, reliability and validity assessment, and statistical analysis using PLS-SEM.

The dissertation has several weaknesses. The research problem and contribution are not formulated as clearly as they should be. The originality of the study is moderate, and the findings are not strongly surprising. The sample selection raises questions about generalizability, and the literature review and bibliometric analysis could have been more critical and more up-to-date. The dissertation also contains language, formatting, and technical errors that should have been corrected before submission.

Nevertheless, the presented reservations do not undermine the dissertation to the extent that it would fail to meet the minimum requirements. The thesis presents a

coherent empirical study, applies appropriate methods, and provides results that contribute to the understanding of the role of trust in online shopping behavior.

Therefore, it can be stated that the doctoral dissertation "Factors Influencing Merchandise Online Shopping: The Mediating Role of Trust" authored by mgr Shahriar Jeddy meets the general requirements of the doctoral dissertation under the regulations of the Legal Act of 20 July 2018 Law on Higher Education and Science and can be presented for the defense procedure for the award of the doctoral degree in the discipline of management and quality sciences.

Konkludując stwierdzam, że rozprawa doktorska pt. Factors Influencing Merchandise Online Shopping: The Mediating Role of Trust" autorstwa mgr Shahriara Jeddy spełnia wymogi, stawiane w Ustawie z dnia 20 lipca 2018 Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce. Wobec tego wnioskuję o dopuszczenie mgr Shahriara Jeddy do dalszych etapów postępowania w przewodzie doktorskim w dyscyplinie nauki o zarządzaniu i jakości.

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