

Electronic Commerce Ethics: The Business Ethics Practices applied by Online Sellers in Qatar

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Abstract

Introduction: As technologies advance, the market takes a step forward and becomes accessible to everyone through the Internet. Especially with the past pandemic of COVID-19, plenty of entrepreneurs joined the online business industry. This study focuses on the business ethics practices of online sellers in Qatar. **Methodology:** Using a quantitative descriptive research design, a survey questionnaire was made and validated. The researchers chose 100 online sellers in Qatar using purposive and quota sampling and distributed the research instrument. **Result:** This study discusses the business ethics used by online sellers, which are Security, Privacy, Non-Deception, and Reliability. Furthermore, the study's results show the level at which online sellers execute these business ethics in electronic commerce. It was found that Reliability is the highest business ethic applied by online sellers in Qatar overall, followed by Privacy, Security, and then Non-Deception. **Discussion:** The conclusion drawn from this study states that most businesses in Qatar practice a high level of business ethics. However, there was also a difference in the online sellers' practice of business ethics according to their demographic profile. Regarding age, the older the respondents, the higher they applied business ethics. In terms of sex, there was a minor to no correlation between gender and online ethical behavior. Finally, in terms of the length of business operation, the longer the business is operated, the higher its owner applied business ethics. **Recommendation:** It is recommended that online sellers in Qatar maintain or improve the practice of business ethics in electronic commerce to benefit their business and their consumers.

Keywords: Business Ethics; Non-Deception; Online Sellers; Privacy; Reliability; Security

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

With the rise of COVID-19, plenty of new enterprises sprang up—enterprises with entrepreneurs who, having run into financial difficulties owing to long-term constraints, use online platforms like Instagram, Google, and Facebook to run their businesses. With the growth of online businesses, there have been reports of online seller fraud. During the pandemic, internet selling platforms allowed sellers to demand exorbitant prices; and acquire as much money as possible from customers. Several internet businesses fail to charge the proper estimation pricing and forget to follow business ethics (Competition and Consumer Protection of the United Nations, 2021).

Furthermore, the same selling platforms allowed the posting of unverified products on their websites. Online vendors take advantage of the fact that online buyers cannot inspect the items once they have purchased them personally. Online sellers take advantage of this circumstance by offering false proof to deceive their buyers, such as photographs, descriptions, and videos of the products.

Moreover, false advertisements for products that claim to provide a health benefit could be harmful to the health of a large number of individuals when the claimed health benefit is not present in the product (Federal Trade Commission of the United States, 2018). Furthermore, most online selling platforms practice consumer feedback. These might take the form of a numerical rating or a narrative account of the purchase and user experience. New customers are more likely to trust the opinions of other customers than the seller's information. The difficulty with depending on customer reviews is that, in certain circumstances, the authors are not actual customers, resulting in fraudulent reviews (Mukherjee, 2017).

Meanwhile, it was found that security and privacy concerns were the most influential factors affecting consumers' online purchasing decisions (Hong & Yi, 2012). Since online shoppers' personal and financial information is compromised, identity theft and financial loss are possible in an online setting. Furthermore, the risk concerns consumers' worries that online businesses may misuse their personal and financial information. It was also found that privacy concerns influence consumers' attitudes toward online shopping (Orubu, 2016).

In addition, there will always be concerns about the ability of the business owner to respond to customer inquiries. Reliability is one factor that influences customers to buy online from specific businesses (Barusman, 2019). Consumers must be able to trust that their products will be delivered on time and without defects. Provided that the item does not meet the customer's expectations, the customer should be able to return the purchased product or be replaced by the online seller.

Furthermore, several regulations have been enacted in Qatar to maintain business ethics. For example, online sellers must disclose their product prices on their websites (The Ministry of Commerce and Industry in Qatar, 2012). Such is an example of Non-Deception in an online marketplace. The validity of online purchases must also be verified using means such as electronic invoicing, digital signatures, trust marks, or electronic transactions that meet the technical standards set by the law.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

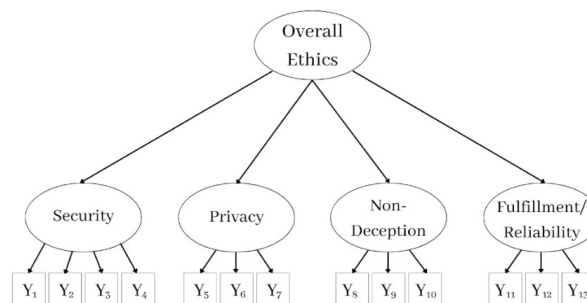


Figure 1: Sergio Roman's CPEOR Model (2007)

Figure 1 shows the developed model to measure consumers' perceptions regarding the ethics of online retailers or CPEOR (Roman, 2007). His findings indicated that the four business ethics in electronic

commerce – Security, Privacy, Non-Deception, and Fulfillment, more commonly labeled as Reliability – strongly predict online consumers' satisfaction and trust—confirmatory factor analysis sub-questions for each factor represented by Y_n .

Security

The first factor that the CPEOR model measures is Security. This factor explains the security of the online transaction, such as the safety of the payment methods and the protection of financial information from unauthorized access. In addition, it also refers to concerns involving a computer system's vulnerability to viruses and other "rogue" programs that can attack a system and its resources. For example, Roman stated in confirmatory factor analysis under Security the following statements: *The security policy is easy to understand; The site displays the terms and conditions of the online transaction before the purchase has taken place; The site appears to offer secure payment methods, and the site has good security features.*

Moreover, researchers used Roman's CPEOR model in their exploratory factor analysis and added the following statement under Security: You can confirm the transaction details before paying (Nardal & Sahin, 2011). It was also mentioned that system security is the second category of a classification scheme for online concerns (Miyazaki & Fernandez, 2001). Statements about fraudulent behavior made by third parties about potentially breaching technological data protection devices to obtain consumers' personal information. They stated under third-party fraudulent behavior for system security the following statements: *Unauthorized third-party access to personal information; Unauthorized third-party access to credit card information; and General security concerns.*

Privacy

The second factor that the CPEOR model measures is Privacy. This factor refers to protecting individually identifiable information on the Internet (Bart et al., 2005). The relevance of this factor is to fulfill the AMA Code of Ethics for Marketing on the Internet, which states that data collected from customers should be confidential and used only for expressed purposes. Roman said in confirmatory factor analysis under Privacy the following statements: *The site clearly explains how user information is used; Only the personal information necessary for the transaction to be completed needs to be provided, and information regarding the privacy policy is presented.* Personal or card data theft or misuse, malware, and hacking are also part of privacy threats (Miyazaki & Fernandez, 2001). Under infringements by online retailers of privacy, they stated the following statements: *Sharing personal information with other companies; Tracking of shopping habits, purchases, and others; Placement of cookies on a consumer's computer; Being contacted by the company without providing consent; and General privacy concerns.*

Non-Deception

The third factor that the CPEOR model measures is Non-Deception. This factor explains how the online seller avoids deceptive or manipulative practices to persuade consumers to purchase the business's offerings. Deception in the context of marketing practices focuses on the online seller's deceiving or misleading practices.

Roman stated in confirmatory factor analysis under Non-Deception the following statements: *The site exaggerates the benefits and characteristics of its offerings; This site takes advantage of less experienced consumers to make them purchase; This site attempts to persuade you to buy things that you do not need.*

Furthermore, researchers who used Roman's CPEOR model used the following statement in their study under Non-Deception: *The site uses misleading tactics to convince consumers to buy its products* (Nardal & Sahin, 2011).

In a research that studied the effect of online product reviews on consumer purchases, findings showed that a consumer is initially uncertain about a product's quality or how it matches their preference (Zhao et al., 2013). This uncertainty leads to the consumer's need to read product reviews and learn from other consumers' usage experiences.

For this reason, the credibility of online reviews is significant. By reading the post-consumption evaluations of others, a consumer can increase certainty about their purchase. However, his study showed that a consumer's trust becomes jeopardized after receiving the product through fake reviews.

Similarly, consumers become easily deceived by online reviews and advertisements because these become their prior knowledge and impression of a product they need to gain first-hand experience (Roman et al., 2019). As a result, consumers experience dissonance when the product does not meet their initial expectations, leading to perceptions of deception.

Fulfillment and Reliability

The fourth factor that the CPEOR model measures are Fulfillment and Reliability. These factors explain the objective of displaying accurate descriptions and information about a product so that consumers receive what they thought they ordered. In the business ethics of electronic commerce, this also includes the delivery of the product within the frame promised. Fulfillment and Reliability are two critical dimensions of online service quality as consumers perceive (Parasuraman et al., 2005). Roman stated in confirmatory factor analysis under Fulfillment and Reliability the following statements: *The price shown on the site is the actual amount billed; You get what you ordered from the site; and Promises to do something by a certain time, they do it.* In addition, researchers who used Roman's CPEOR model, added the following statement under Reliability: *The products I looked at were available* (Nardal & Sahin, 2011).

Moreover, the quality dimensions of the service of electronic marketplaces were explored. An exploratory factor analysis under the Reliability of the service provided in the marketplace mentions the following statements: *The products are delivered in good condition, free of defects; The e-marketplace responds to my requests quickly; The e-marketplace has a client support area in order to address any questions and comments that I might have* (Janita & Miranda, 2013).

1.3 Research Questions

The main objective of this study is to determine the level of application of business ethics by online sellers in Qatar. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:

- 1.1 age;
 - 1.2 sex; and
 - 1.3 length of business operation?
2. What is the level of application of online business ethics practiced by online sellers in terms of:
 - 2.1 Security;
 - 2.2 Privacy;
 - 2.3 Non-Deception; and
 - 2.4 Reliability?
3. Which group of online sellers has the highest level of application of business ethics in electronic commerce in terms of:
 - 3.1 age;
 - 3.2 sex; and
 - 3.3 length of business operation?

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study is quantitative, in general, and categorically, a descriptive research design, as it aims to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation, or phenomenon. Quantitative research is a set of strategies, techniques, and assumptions to study psychological, social, and economic processes by exploring numeric patterns (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). This research approach is best suited to gathering the necessary data to summarize, analyze, and recommend implications in light of business ethics practices in Qatar's online sellers. Therefore, the researchers used a quantitative method and used survey questionnaires to collect data. It was necessary to use this method because it provided a high level of control over the variables and had an advantage in finding accuracy, consistency, and precision in its results. In addition, the descriptive research approach was applied, which is a type of research that answers what, where, when, and how questions (McCombers, 2019).

2.2 Research Locus and Sample

The researchers conducted this study in Doha, Qatar to meet the academic desire of Filipino children in the country guided by its philosophy of Service and Excellence. The study's respondents were online sellers based in Qatar.

The researchers used purposive and quota sampling. Purposive sampling, also known as judgment sampling, is the deliberate participant selection based on the subject's attributes. It is a type of non-probability sampling in which the researchers select participants for the sample based on several characteristics, such as expert knowledge of the research topic, competency, and willingness to engage in the study (Laerd Dissertation, 2012). Then, the researchers gathered a total of one hundred online sellers – fifty male and fifty female – in Qatar as the respondents of the research study using the quota sampling strategy. Quota sampling is a technique with a target number of respondents, guided by some evidence of characteristics such as sex, race, or population of interest (Etikan & Bala, 2017). They recommended using this number of respondents as

it follows the rules of proportional quota sampling wherein a significant population is represented by sampling a balanced total. This combined sampling technique involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of proficient and well-informed individuals with a phenomenon of interest within a given quota.

After acquiring approval from the respondents and the relevant authorities in the research locale, the researchers selected the respondents through the criteria of accessibility and how possible it is for the researchers to reach them. In doing the research, the researchers followed proper protocols to get the consent of the respondents and authorities to conduct the study.

2.3 Research Instrument

The researchers developed a questionnaire to meet the objective of this study. The questionnaire had close-ended questions based on primary and secondary sources. The researchers followed several steps to use a valid instrument. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part contained the letter to the respondents. The second was the profile of the respondents. The third was the properly developed questionnaire regarding business ethics.

2.4 Development and Validation of the Research Instrument

STEP 1 – Content Validation

In this stage, a pre-research was conducted to get the necessary data for the survey questionnaire. The questions were based on the theoretical framework of online business ethics.

STEP 2 – Face Validation

The test items were examined and judged to determine whether they were valid for measuring the variable being studied. In addition, the questionnaire was checked by experts in the field and revised based on the recommendations of the validators.

STEP 3 – Final Administration

The respondent questionnaires were facilitated to the selected online sellers in Qatar through Google Forms from April to October 2022.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The data were collected in the following manner: First, the number of respondents was determined through quota and purposeful sampling techniques. Second, the researchers approached the online sellers through the businesses' provided contact method (electronic mail or social media). Third, the businesses that gave their consent and confirmation were listed. Fourth, a permission letter was requested to conduct the study from the Vice Principal. The fifth step was administering the developed instrument to the respondents, followed by its retrieval. Finally, the data were tallied and then analyzed.

2.6 Statistical Treatment of Data

This study used percentage, frequency, ranking, and weighted mean as the statistical treatment applied to the data collected to determine the answers gathered in this study. Percentage and frequency distributions

were applied to determine the demographic profile of the respondents. The use of ranking determined the placement of the business ethics practices applied by online sellers. This step was essential to project the highest and lowest variables regarding business ethics. Lastly, the use of weighted mean determined the level of application of the business ethics practices that online businesses apply in terms of Security, Privacy, Non-Deception, and Fulfillment and Reliability. The table below shows the interpretation and explanation of each weighted mean range.

3. Results

The objective of this study is to find the level of application of business ethics practiced by online sellers in Qatar.

Table 1. The Demographic Profile of the Respondents in terms of Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Under 18 years old	5	5%
18 to 24 years old	31	31%
25 to 34 years old	37	37%
35 to 44 years old	27	27%
Above 44 years old	0	0%
Total	100	100%

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age. Out of one hundred (100) online sellers, 5% were under 18 years old, 31% were 18 to 24 years old, 37% were 25 to 34 years old, and 27% were 35 to 44 years old. None of the respondents were above 44 years old.

Business owners are usually middle-aged as leadership and the desire for entrepreneurship are developed with age and experience. Hence, owners are generally 26 to 55 years old (Luthans et al., 2019). This finding is similar to the data presented in Table 1, showing that online business owners are often between 25 to 34 years old.

Table 2. The Demographic Profile of the Respondents in terms of Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	50	50%
Female	50	50%
Total	100	100%

Table 2 shows the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of sex. Out of one hundred (100) online sellers, 50% were male, and 50% were female.

Multiple business owners are making the Internet their alternative marketing platform to sell their products. Electronic commerce has become common recently, with male and female entrepreneurs using the Internet more frequently for their business endeavors (The Center for Women's Business Research, 2001).

It was observed that running one's business online is especially appealing to women (DeMartino & Barbato, 2003). Unlike physical business settings, which are traditionally male-dominated, Internet businesses may offer women more work opportunities. In addition, women are less subject to discrimination based on gender because of the restricted human interaction online (Jome et al., 2006). Since some career barriers and gender discrimination issues are reduced, it is no surprise that many females choose the Internet as their marketplace.

In addition, gender stereotypes influence men's and women's intentions to pursue a business (Fagenson & Marcus, 1991; Gupta et al., 2008). Similarly, when leadership and management characteristics were compared, the science-based difference is that the female brain is more multitasking and creative (Ferk et al., 2013). Meanwhile, the male brain is specialized to be more single-tasking and task-oriented. However, despite these differences, several studies implied that both genders could pursue a business venture if desired.

In particular, research studies found that male and female online sellers tend to convey different reasons for starting their businesses. For example, women tend to start their businesses to have more job flexibility and life-work balance. Meanwhile, men more often become business owners for financial gain (Brush, 1992; DeMartino & Barbato, 2003; Moore & Buttner, 1997).

Table 3. The Demographic Profile of the Respondents in terms of Length of Business Operation

Length of Business Operation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than a year	20	20%
1 to 2 years	56	56%
3 to 4 years	13	13%
4 to 5 years	3	3%
More than 5 years	8	8%
Total	100	100%

Table 3 shows the respondents' demographic profile regarding the length of their business operation. Out of one hundred (100) respondents, 20% have had their business for less than a year, 56% have had their business from 1 to 2 years, 13% have their business from 3 to 4 years, 3% have their business from 4 to 5 years, and 8% have their business for more than five years.

The rise of electronic commerce can be attributed to technological advances in the 21st century, which changed how people and businesses interact. It was observed that the Internet allows businesses to earn profit in an alternative and, for some, more convenient marketplace (Smith, 2019).

In addition, it can be observed in Table 3 that more than half of the respondents started their business 1 to 2 years from the study's survey distribution which dates back to 2020 to 2021. The coronavirus disease

dominated during this time, especially in early 2020 (American Journal of Managed Care, 2020; University of California Irvine, 2022).

Georgieva, head of the International Monetary Fund, explained that global economic growth fell in 2020, triggering the worst fallout since the 1930s Great Depression (BBC News, 2020). Fortunately, businesses saw the benefit of trading online, which offered people the opportunity to satisfy their consumption even during pandemic restrictions.

Although technological innovation has been the main factor for the increase in electronic commerce even before 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the significance of online trade. Hence, it was proven that the COVID-19 pandemic drove consumers and business owners worldwide to embrace online shopping (Bubanja & Vidas-Bubanja, 2022). The result was the rise of electronic commerce during 2020 and beyond.

Table 4. The Level of Application of Online Business Ethics in terms of Security

Security	WM	VI
1. I make sure that the security policies of my selling platform are easy to understand.	3.86	Always
2. I explain how the online transaction is done before the purchase has taken place.	3.80	Always
3. I offer secure payment methods.	3.86	Always
4. I use adequate security features such as authentication of the consumer's information.	3.57	Always
5. I take extra precautions in protecting my selling platform to avoid data invasion (e.g., using strong passwords or antivirus software).	3.79	Always
Overall Weighted Mean	3.78	Always

Legend:

WM (Weighted Mean); VI (Verbal Interpretation)

1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 4 shows the respondents' level of application of online business ethics in terms of Security. The statements 'I make sure that the security policies of my selling platform are easy to understand.' and 'I offer secure payment methods.' got the highest weighted mean of 3.86, which is verbally interpreted as always. They are followed by the statement 'I explain how the online transaction is done before the purchase has taken place.' with a weighted mean of 3.80, which is verbally interpreted as always. Then, the statement 'I take extra precautions in protecting my selling platform to avoid data invasion (e.g., using strong passwords or antivirus software).' got a weighted mean of 3.79, which is verbally interpreted as always. Lastly, the statement 'I use adequate security features such as authentication of the consumer's information.' got a weighted mean of 3.57, which is verbally interpreted as always.

The overall weighted mean of Table 4, which discusses the respondents' level of application of online business ethics in terms of Security, is 3.78 and verbally interpreted as always.

The statements 'I make sure that the security policies of my selling platform are easy to understand.' and 'I offer secure payment methods.' had the highest weighted mean. The online marketplace was studied to determine the importance of trust variables in electronic commerce. The study's results suggested the high importance of the security of transactions, including reliable security policies and safe payment methods (Austin et al., 2006).

Similarly, a conducted study about ethics and marketing on the Internet had a sample of 292 business executives. Over half of the respondents (55%) agreed that business owners are concerned with security policies on the Internet (Bush et al., 2000).

The ethical concerns of the respondents in Internet marketing were also asked. The most often mentioned was the security of transactions (Bush et al., 2000). Moreover, 82% of online executives indicated that businesses should practice a code of ethics on the Internet.

Table 5. The Level of Application of Online Business Ethics in terms of Privacy

Privacy	WM	VI
1. I make sure my consumers understand how their user information is used.	3.75	Always
2. I require only the necessary personal information of consumers for the transaction to be completed.	3.94	Always
3. I make sure that the personal information of the consumers is kept confidential.	3.89	Always
4. I do not trick consumers into giving sensitive information.	3.72	Always
5. I use the personal information given by the consumers for business purposes only.	3.90	Always
Overall Weighted Mean	3.84	Always

Legend:

WM (Weighted Mean); VI (Verbal Interpretation)

1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 5 shows the respondents' level of application of online business ethics in terms of Privacy. The statement 'I require only the necessary personal information of consumers for the transaction to be completed.' got the highest weighted mean of 3.94, which is verbally interpreted as always. It is followed by the statement, 'I use the personal information given by the consumers for business purposes only.' with a weighted mean of 3.90, which is verbally interpreted as always. Next, the statement 'I make sure that the personal information of the consumers is kept confidential.' got a weighted mean of 3.89, which is verbally interpreted as always. Then, the statement 'I make sure my consumers understand how their user information is used.' got a weighted mean of 3.75, which is verbally interpreted as always. Lastly, the statement 'I do not trick consumers into giving sensitive information.' got a weighted mean of 3.72, which is verbally interpreted as always.

The overall weighted mean of Table 5, which discusses the respondents' level of application of online business ethics in terms of Privacy, is 3.84 and verbally interpreted as always.

The statement 'I require only the necessary personal information of consumers for the transaction to be completed.' had the highest weighted mean. It was argued that being a provider of goods on the Internet allows a seller to gain authority over only the necessary personal information of their consumers, except for information collected by website cookies which are not required in the transaction of the business (Miller & Weckert, 2000). The two authors defined Privacy in the Journal of Business Ethics as a moral right a consumer has concerning the possession of information by online sellers about him or herself.

Table 6. The Level of Application of Online Business Ethics in terms of Non-Deception

Non-Deception	WM	VI
1. I present the exact benefits, prices, and characteristics of my business products.	3.88	Always
2. I do not give false information to less experienced customers to trick them into buying.	3.71	Always
3. I do not attempt to persuade consumers to buy things that they do not need.	3.68	Always
4. I do not allow fake product reviews.	3.85	Always
5. I do not show misleading advertisements.	3.74	Always
Overall Weighted Mean	3.77	Always

Legend:

WM (Weighted Mean); VI (Verbal Interpretation)

1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 6 shows the respondents' level of application of online business ethics in terms of Non-Deception. The statement 'I present the exact benefits, price, and characteristics of my business products.' got the highest weighted mean of 3.88, which is verbally interpreted as always. It is followed by the statement 'I do not allow fake product reviews.' with a weighted mean of 3.85, which is verbally interpreted as always. Next, the statement 'I do not show misleading advertisements.' got a weighted mean of 3.74, which is verbally interpreted as always. Then, the statement 'I do not give false information to less experienced customers to trick them into buying.' got a weighted mean of 3.71, which is verbally interpreted as always. Lastly, the statement 'I do not attempt to persuade consumers to buy things that they do not need.' got a weighted mean of 3.68, which is verbally interpreted as always.

The overall weighted mean of Table 6, which discusses the respondents' level of application of online business ethics in terms of Non-Deception, is 3.77 and verbally interpreted as always.

The statement 'I present the exact benefits, price, and characteristics of my business products.' had the highest weighted mean. The ethical issues concerning marketing on the Internet were assessed among a sample of 292 marketing executives (Bush et al., 2000). Aside from the security of transactions, another ethical concern most often mentioned by the respondents was the truthfulness of the products' or services' information displayed on a website.

Similarly, presenting honest and non-misleading details was one of the ethical concerns of advertising executives (Hunt & Chonko, 1987). The problem often focused on avoiding misleading the public concerning the characteristics of a product, especially its price. A creative director discussed that the integrity of the business requires the act of Non-Deception to be fair to the consumer.

Table 7. The Level of Application of Online Business Ethics in terms of Fulfillment/Reliability

Fulfillment/Reliability	WM	VI
1. I make sure that the products are delivered in good condition and free of defects.	3.90	Always
2. I make sure that the consumers receive what was advertised to them in my business.	3.87	Always
3. I make sure to accomplish orders correctly and within the promised time frame.	3.88	Always
4. I make sure that the products shown to the consumers are available.	3.92	Always
5. I respond to the concerns and queries of the consumers.	3.92	Always
Overall Weighted Mean	3.90	Always

Legend:

WM (Weighted Mean); VI (Verbal Interpretation)

1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 7 shows the respondents' level of application of online business ethics regarding Reliability. The statements 'I make sure that the products shown to the consumers are available.' and 'I respond to the concerns and queries of the consumers.' got the highest weighted mean of 3.92, which is verbally interpreted as always. They are followed by the statement, 'I make sure that the products are delivered in good condition and free of defects.' with a weighted mean of 3.90, which is verbally interpreted as always. Then, the statement 'I make sure to accomplish orders correctly and within the promised time frame.' got a weighted mean of 3.88, which is verbally interpreted as always. Lastly, the statement 'I make sure that the consumers receive what was advertised to them in my business.' got a weighted mean of 3.87, which is verbally interpreted as always.

The overall weighted mean of Table 7, which discusses the respondents' level of application of online business ethics in terms of Reliability, is 3.90 and verbally interpreted as always.

One of the statements, 'I make sure that the products shown to the consumers are available.' had the highest weighted mean. Researchers developed a conceptual model about the influence of underlying category factors in an online business (Bart et al., 2005). The study showed that the absence of errors was the highest driving role for business ethics. The absence of errors refers to the lack of mistakes on a site, such as non-availability or incorrect processing of orders (Journal in Marketing, 2005).

Another statement, 'I respond to the concerns and queries of the consumers.' also had the highest weighted mean. It was found that the quality of a service process consisted of five dimensions (Parasuraman et al.,

1988). One of these dimensions was responsiveness. They observed that for value in relationships between a consumer and a business, the consumer must feel that the business responds to their needs.

Table 8. Summary of the Level of Application of Online Business Ethics by the Online Sellers

Business Ethic	Overall WM	VI
Security	3.78	Always
Privacy	3.84	Always
Non-Deception	3.77	Always
Fulfillment/Reliability	3.90	Always

Legend:

WM (Weighted Mean); VI (Verbal Interpretation)

1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 8 shows the overall level of application of online business ethics. Reliability is the most practiced business ethic by online sellers in Qatar, with an overall weighted mean of 3.90. This is followed by Privacy with 3.84 and Security with 3.78. Non-Deception is the least practiced business ethic, with an overall weighted mean of 3.77. All weighted means mentioned are verbally interpreted as always.

The result revealed that the online sellers highly applied online business ethics in regard to Security, Privacy, Non-Deception, and Reliability.

Interestingly, the Reliability of online sellers significantly affected customer satisfaction in electronic commerce (Roman, 2007). The importance of Reliability is explained by the fact that Internet retailing does not offer enough product evaluation for a customer (Grewal et al., 2004). Consequently, Reliability becomes a key factor expected of online business owners.

It was also found that the Non-Deception of online sellers was the weakest ethic of online retailing (Roman, 2007). He stated that a reasonable explanation is that consumers have long been exposed to deceptive sales practices in an offline marketplace. Therefore, they would rather be more concerned with aspects relevant to an online environment, such as Reliability, Privacy, and Security.

Table 9. The Level of Application of Business Ethics in terms of Age

Age	Security	Privacy	Non-Deception	Reliability	Overall WM	VI
Under 18	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	Often
18 to 24	3.83	3.83	3.70	3.88	3.81	Always
25 to 34	3.67	3.88	3.77	3.97	3.83	Always
35 to 44	3.98	3.96	3.99	3.99	3.98	Always

Legend:

WM (Weighted Mean); VI (Verbal Interpretation)

1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 9 summarizes the respondents' level of application of business ethics in terms of age. In terms of Security, respondents aged 35 to 44 got the highest weighted mean of 3.98, which is verbally interpreted as always. In terms of Privacy, respondents aged 35 to 44 got the highest weighted mean of 3.96, which is verbally interpreted as always. Regarding Non-Deception, respondents aged 35 to 44 got the highest weighted mean of 3.99, which is verbally interpreted as always. Finally, in terms of Reliability, respondents aged 35 to 44 got the highest weighted mean of 3.99, which is verbally interpreted as always.

The respondents from 35 to 44 years old, 25 to 34 years old, and 18 to 24 years old got an overall weighted mean of 3.98, 3.83, and 3.81 respectively, which is verbally interpreted as always. Lastly, the respondents under 18 got an overall weighted mean of 3.00, which is verbally interpreted as often.

This could be interpreted to mean that ages 18 to 44 online sellers in Qatar highly applied online business ethics in regard to Security, Privacy, Non-Deception, and Reliability. While under 18 years old, only moderately applied all the online business ethics mentioned above.

In a similar study, those respondents belonging to the 40-plus age group were the most ethical, followed in order by the 31 to 40 group, the 22 to 30 group, and those 21 years of age and below (Ruegger & King, 1992). Ruegger and King observed that the application of business ethics ranked from oldest to youngest. Similarly, Table 9 shows that the most ethical was the online sellers in the 35 to 44 group, followed by the 25 to 34 group, and the 18 to 24 group and below.

Another study also found that the oldest age group in its sample showed the highest market value and success compared to their peers (Bai et al., 2022). Eight hundred forty company founders were studied, and it showed that older business owners necessarily have more experience for better performance and familiarity (Into the Mind, 2021).

Table 10. The Level of Application of Business Ethics in terms of Sex

Sex	Security	Privacy	Non-Deception	Reliability	Overall WM	VI
Male	3.79	3.85	3.81	3.86	3.83	Always
Female	3.76	3.83	3.74	3.94	3.82	Always

Legend:

WM (Weighted Mean); VI (Verbal Interpretation)

1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 10 summarizes the respondents' level of application of business ethics in terms of sex. In terms of Security, the male respondents got the higher weighted mean of 3.79, which is verbally interpreted as always. In terms of Privacy, the male respondents got the higher weighted mean of 3.85, which is verbally interpreted as always. In terms of Non-Deception, the male respondents got the higher weighted mean of 3.81, which is verbally interpreted as always. Finally, in terms of Reliability, the female respondents got the higher weighted mean of 3.94, which is verbally interpreted as always.

The male respondents got a higher overall weighted mean of 3.83, which is verbally interpreted as always. Meanwhile, the female respondents got an overall weighted mean of 3.82, which is verbally interpreted as always.

Although the male respondents received a higher overall weighted mean, there is a difference of only 0.01 between the two sexual orientations, suggesting an almost equal level of application of business ethics. In a study about the effect of gender on the business ethics of students, among ten questions asked in the survey, four of the questions showed that there was no significant difference in the ethical beliefs of males and females (Ruegger & King, 1992). However, six questions suggested that females are more ethical in their perception of ethical business situations. It was also reported that businesswomen behave more ethically than businessmen (Ekin & Tezölmez, 2014). They stated that social roles strongly impact a person's behavior. For instance, social roles associated with women make them more sensitive and conforming, whereas men are more carefree and independent. Both studies contradict the result of Table 10.

Several other studies gathered different results from their data collection, which asserted that females are more ethical than males (Betz et al., 1989). Meanwhile, it is also believed that males and females share similar ethical beliefs (McNichols & Zimmer, 1985).

Table 11. The Level of Application of Business Ethics in terms of Length of Business Operation

Length	Security	Privacy	Non-Deception	Reliability	Overall WM	VI
< Year	3.67	3.71	3.67	3.74	3.70	Always
1 to 2	3.74	3.83	3.73	3.92	3.81	Always
3 to 4	3.92	3.94	3.97	3.95	3.95	Always
4 to 5	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	Always
>5 Years	3.95	4.00	3.90	4.00	3.96	Always

Legend:

WM (Weighted Mean); VI (Verbal Interpretation)

1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 11 shows the summary of the respondents' level of application of business ethics in terms of the length of their business operation. In terms of Security, the respondents with businesses for 4 to 5 years got the highest weighted mean of 4.00, which is verbally interpreted as always. In terms of Privacy, the respondents with businesses for 4 to 5 years and more than five years got the highest weighted mean of 4.00, which is verbally interpreted as always. In terms of Non-Deception, the respondents with businesses for 4 to 5 years got the highest weighted mean of 4.00, which is verbally interpreted as always. Finally, in terms of Reliability, the respondents with the business for 4 to 5 years and more than five years got the highest weighted mean of 4.00, which is verbally interpreted as always.

The respondents with businesses for 4 to 5 years got the highest overall weighted mean of 4.00, which is verbally interpreted as always. They are followed by the respondents with businesses for more than five years with an overall weighted mean of 3.96, which is verbally interpreted as always. Next, the respondents with businesses for 3 to 4 years got an overall weighted mean of 3.95, which is verbally interpreted as always. Then, the respondents with businesses for 1 to 2 years got an overall weighted mean of 3.81, which is verbally interpreted as always. Lastly, the respondents with businesses for less than a year got an overall weighted mean of 3.70, which is verbally interpreted as always.

Table 11 shows that the respondents with businesses for 4 to 5 years got the highest overall weighted mean, followed by those with businesses for more than five years. There is a positive relationship between

work experience and job performance (Quiñones et al., 2001). The longer employees operate a business, the more likely they are to practice ethical behavior.

4. Discussion

This study discusses the business ethics of online sellers in Qatar regarding Reliability, Privacy, Security, and Non-Deception. From its overall application, most practiced business ethic, and the respondents' age, sex, and length of business operation.

The online sellers in Qatar provided the data for this study's survey. The respondents were adults with ages ranging from below 18 to 44 years old, with a majority of online sellers who are aged 25 to 34 years old and the least who are under 18 years old. It was also found that the usual age range for business owners is 26 to 55 years old (Luthans et al., 2019). This finding supports that the online sellers are in their prime and younger years since most respondents are under 50.

In terms of the length of business operation, most online sellers have been running their business for 1 to 2 years. This data implies that most electronic commerce entrepreneurs joined the online business industry due to the limited face-to-face interaction with consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This research observed a high level of application of business ethics practiced by online sellers in Qatar. In terms of Security, the results suggested the high importance of the security of transactions to online sellers, including reliable security policies and safe payment methods.

Another finding is that the most practiced business ethic by online sellers in Qatar is Reliability, followed by Privacy, Security, and Non-Deception. Interestingly, a conceptual model was developed about the influence of underlying category factors in an online business (Bart et al., 2005). The study showed that Reliability was the highest driving role for business ethics. Reliability is the lack of mistakes on a site, such as non-availability or incorrect processing of orders (Journal in Marketing, 2005). Privacy, the second most practiced business ethic, supports the claim that being an online seller only allows one to gain authority over the necessary information of their consumers and not their unnecessary personal information (Miller & Weckert, 2000). Similarly, the security of transactions also has high importance after Reliability and Privacy, including reliable security policies and safe payment methods (Austin et al., 2006). Another ethical concern mentioned after Security was the truthfulness of the products' or services' information displayed on a website (Bush et al., 2000). This concern equates to the business ethic Non-Deception.

Specifically, the findings show which group of online sellers practiced the highest level of business ethics on each demographic profile of the respondents. Based on the age of the respondents, ages 35 to 44 practiced the highest level of business ethics in electronic commerce. In addition, the researchers observed that the application of business ethics ranked from oldest to youngest. Similarly, respondents belonging to the 40-plus age group were the most ethical, followed in order by the 31 to 40 group, the 22 to 30 group, and those 21 years of age and below (Ruegger & King, 1992). It was also found that the oldest age group in their sample showed the highest market value and success compared to their peers (Bai et al., 2022).

Moreover, based on the sex of the respondents, there was a difference of only 0.01 between the two sexual orientations in favor of the male respondents, suggesting an almost equal level of application of business

ethics. If the difference were to be considered, male online sellers would practice a higher application of business ethics than female online sellers. In contrast, business women behave more ethically than businessmen (Ekin & Tezölmez, 2014). They stated that social roles strongly impact a person's behavior. For instance, social roles associated with women make them more sensitive and conforming, whereas men are more carefree and independent.

Furthermore, based on the length of business operation, the results show that those online sellers who have been running their business for 4 to 5 years practiced the highest application of business ethics. This data establishes a positive relationship between work experience and job performance (Quiñones et al.'s, 2001). The longer employees operate a business, the more likely they are to practice ethical behavior. The objective of this study is to find the level of application of business ethics practiced by online sellers in Qatar.

5. Conclusions

It is concluded that 25 to 34 years old is the most prominent age of online sellers comprising most of the total population of the study, which means that the online sellers in Qatar are at their prime and young ages. In terms of sex, the online sellers are allocated equally between males and females, providing non-gender-biased data. As for the length of the business operation, most online sellers in Qatar have been running their businesses for 1 to 2 years.

Moreover, it is concluded that the online sellers in Qatar practiced a high level of application of business ethics in their online businesses. The most practiced business ethic is Reliability. It is a type of business ethic that explains the objective of displaying accurate descriptions and information about a product so that consumers receive what they thought they ordered. In the business ethics of electronic commerce, this also includes the delivery of the product within the frame promised.

It is previously indicated that based on age, online sellers aged 35 to 44 practiced the overall highest level of application of business ethics. They are the oldest age group among the respondents. It was observed that the older entrepreneurs were necessarily more ethical because of more experience and familiarity in the business.

In addition, the results of the more ethical online sellers based on sex suggest a minor to no correlation between gender and online ethical behavior, as there was a difference of only 0.01 between the male and female online sellers. Therefore, taking everything into account, the results suggest that sex does not affect the level of application of business ethics in electronic commerce.

Furthermore, online sellers running their businesses for 4 to 5 years had the highest application of business ethics. With an implication that there is a positive relationship between work experience and job performance, online sellers are more likely to practice ethical behavior the longer they operate a business.

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that online sellers in Qatar maintain their practice of business ethics in electronic commerce. It is also recommended that online sellers improve their application of the business ethic Non-Deception. Since this factor explains how online sellers avoid deceptive or manipulative practices in the context of marketing, online sellers should ensure the truthfulness of their products and services. This practice will help improve the function and image of their business. Furthermore,

this study is conducted by Senior High School students and recommends that future researchers who will be investigating the same phenomenon use other statistical treatments on the data, such as Regression Analysis, Analysis of Variance, and T-Test for further exploration of the correlation of the variables, as this current study is only limited to describing the level of application of business ethics of the online sellers in Qatar. Meanwhile, teachers and parents can use this research to guide students interested in business-related courses, especially those enrolled in the Accounting, Business, and Management strand. Consumers can also use this study to guide their decision-making in choosing which kinds of online businesses are most ethical and most suitable for their patronage. It is also recommended to use this study as a basis for ethical business behavior for online sellers and business owners to enhance and broaden their knowledge of business ethics. This study will also help them evaluate their performance and practices in managing their business for their benefit and their consumers.

Finally, there is a need for more research on Internet entrepreneurs in general. Given electronic commerce's unique career issues, it is vital to understand more about the characteristics and experiences of men and women who run business ventures in electronic commerce.

This study discusses the business ethics of online sellers in Qatar regarding Reliability, Privacy, Security, and Non-Deception. From its overall application, most practiced business ethic, and the respondents' age, sex, and length of business operation.

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