SURVEY REPORT

ON YOUNG ONLINE CONSUMMER BEHAVIOUR AND RISKS IN VIETNAM

Written by
M.A. Nguyen Phuong Linh (Chief author)
MSc. Do Van Trai
Management and Sustainable Development Institute (MSD)

Hanoi, January 2021

Written by

M.A. Nguyen Phuong Linh (Chief author)

MSc. Tran Van Anh

MSc. Do Van Trai

Management and Sustainable Development Institute (MSD)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

Online consumption and behavior and risks have become an emerging issue in Vietnam; however, we can see the upward trend of online consumption, particularly among the youth nowaday. Apart from the advantages, there are several potential risks such as personal data theft, violence, etc. Particularly, in the global pandemic of the COVID19 context, young people's needs for shopping online are increasing dramatically, which requires evidence - based communication and policy advocacy to raise the awareness of online consumers, to promote production innovations of digital enterprises, and to support the government in developing policies to ensure the rights and safety of young online consumers in Vietnam.

A survey of online consumption behavior and risks among Vietnamese youth youth was jointly conducted by Management and Sustainable Development Institute (MSD) and the Asia Foundation (TAF). The overall objective of the survey is to assess consumption behavior and risks that children and youth may encounter when shopping online and how service providers/businesses and stakeholders support and protect young consumers. The report findings can be an evidence-based reference for the state management agencies regarding online consumption and consumer rights. The survey was conducted with the participation of about 1,000 Vietnamese teenagers aged from 13 to 25, regardless of ethnicities, regions, or religions. The data was collected through online questionnaires and focus group discussions. Focus group discussions were done after initial results of the survey had been generated to dig deeper the issues and provide solutions to the problems that they are concerned about.

We hope that this survey report will promote practical actions from

relevant stakeholders, including the state management agencies, service providers/businesses, families, and communities to excute the rights and responsibilities for online consumption, management, and provision.

On behalf of MSD, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Asia Foundation for their financial support for this survey, especially Ms. Nguyen Thu Hang who directly commented and edited to ensure the quality of the report. I would also like to extend my special appreciation to the young people for their enthusiastic participation and valuable contribution to the survey.

We hope to receive positive feedback from our readers.

Best Regards,

M.A. Nguyen Phuong Linh – Executive Director of MSD

KEY FINDINGS

1.
97,5%
of respondents
used their phones
to access
the internet.

2. **99%** of
young people used
online social networks
and **95%** of them
consumed online
products for
entertainment
purposes.

3.
Two-thirds
of respondents
said that
they were not really
satisfied or dissatisfied
with online products.

4.   The top 5 factors that influence young people to make buying decisions are:

1. Convenient payment method;

2. Fast information processing (for example: fast order/ service confirmation, search, etc.);

3. Product / service delivery mode;

4. Prestige and brand names of businesses/websites;

5. Easy to search for products.

5.   Out of 10 surveyed young people, about 3-4 people worried about a high possibility of risks including

FAKE counterfeit products, poor quality products;	product quality and design did not meet consumers' expectations due to inappropriate advertising programs;	being scammed to transfer money to a wrong account, leading money loss.

Other risks were assessed at low level.

6.   More than two-thirds of young people said that they have never or sometimes experienced risks when consuming online products and services.

7.   Only 23.3% of young people read product information before making a purchase decision.

8.   When encountering risks, young people (over 67.2%) would mainly write reviews on the website and 53.5% of young people complained to businesses or sale channels; about 3 in 10 young people asked for help from their friends, 16.1% of young people accepted the risks and did nothing.

9.   Less than 20% of young people thought of complaining to authorities, consumer protection agencies or children/youth protection agencies, only 23.1% of respondents learned about legal documents related to online consumption.

10.   88% of respondents said that enterprises need to provide information fully and transparently about the enterprises, products, conditions and transaction methods, etc.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1 The state management agencies should strengthen communication and awareness raising activities for related agencies, social organizations, and consumers, especially young consumers about the risks of online consumption. In addition, online consumption needs to be clearly defined that it is not only buying goods online, but also many other types such as accessing websites, using applications, etc. In adition, the Vietnam Competition and Consumer Authority (VCCA) and the call center 1800.6838 should be more friendly accessible for consumers.

2 The state management agencies need to publicize a list of online product / service providers that violate the law.

3 The state management agencies such as the Ministry of Education and Training consider adjusting the school curriculum to help students access and practice digital and information technology skills for safe and creative interaction on the internet;

4 The state management agencies encourage enterprises to develop and provide useful services, products, technology solution initiatives, particularly not only products for entertainment purposes, but also products for education and communication to support children interacting creatively and safely on the internet; Propose policies to encourage, support and manage businesses to implement cyber security standards for young people, promoting a movement for technology startups to create useful safe products for young people.

5 Businesses or units providing online products/services should commit to ensure confidentiality of online consumers' information.

6 Businesses should promote research on young people's needs to develop relevant products to ensure safe active interaction on the internet for young people;

7 Young consumers should read instructions and requirements carefully before purchasing online products/services to minimize risks for themselves.

8 Young consumers should pro-actively contact relevant state management agencies if they experience risks of online consumption instead of accepting and doing nothing.

9 Young people should learn and use other useful functions of the internet for their study and personal development.

TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE REPORT

Adolescents	are those who are in a period of transition from childhood into adulthood between 10 and 19 years of age (according to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child).
Youth	includes Vietnamese citizens aged between sixteen and thirty years (Article 1, the Vietnamese Youth Law).
Online consumption	consumption is defined as an e-commerce form that allows consumers to buy products or services directly from sellers on the websites.
Digital technology	technology is defined as the process of changing from a traditional model into a digital enterprise by applying new technologies such as: Big Data, Internet of Things (IoT), Cloud Computing (iCloud), etc. changing the way of operation, leadership, working processes and company culture.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The survey on online consumption behavior among Vietnamese youth was jointly conducted by Management and Sustainable Development Institute (MSD) and the Asia Foundation (TAF) to assess youth's perceptions on online consumption behavior and risks. The survey findings will help raise youth's awareness and influence online service providers to develop safe products with high confidentiality. The survey development included survey design, focus group discussions, key informant consultation and report consolidation.

1.2. Survey objectives

-       To collect and analyze Vietnamese youth's ideas about online consumption behavior and risks;

-       To propose policy implications and recommendations for appropriate service provision and protection of young online consumers.

1.3. Survey population

The survey was conducted with the participation of 1,001 adolescents and youth in urban, rural, and mountainous areas throughout the country from August to October, 2020. In addition, consultations with representatives of relevant businesses and state management agencies were also taken.

Table 1: General information on survey samples (N=1,001)

No.	Information		Quantity	Percentage (%)
1	**Age**	13 - 15	61	6.09
		16 - 18	456	45.55
		19 - 22	399	39.86
		23 - 25	85	8.49
2	**Gender**	Male	291	29.07
		Female	708	70.73
		Other	2	0.2
3	**Areas**	Urban	625	62.44
		Rural	321	32.07
		Mountainous	55	5.49
4	**Regions**	Northern	730	72.93
		Middle area –Tay Nguyen Highland	105	10.49
		Southern	166	16.58

Respondents in the 16 - 18 age group mostly participated in the survey, accounting for 45.55% of the total respondents. The female rate is double the male rate and urban area has the greatest number of surveyed participants as compared to other areas with over 60%.

1.4. Survey methods

To capture an overall picture of the online consumption behavior and risks among youth, a mixture of various methods were used, including literature review, questionnaire survey, group discussions, and in-depth interviews.

- Desk study was used to review a wide range of relevant documents developed by MSD and other organizations; national surveys by prestigious enterprises and the United Nations organizations, etc;

- The quantitative research method was used to design a youth - friendly online survey questionnaire on Google form platform;

- Five in-depth interviews and one focus group discussion were

implemented with the participation of representatives of relevant businesses and state management agencies (representatives of the Department of Child Protection, Authority of Information Security, etc.);

-       One group discussion was conducted with the participation of 20 young people to verify the findings of the draft survey.

1.5. Survey location and timing

Location: The survey was conducted nationwide, in urban, rural and mountainous areas as well as social protection centers.

Time: 26th August to 30th October, 2020

1.6. Data processing

Data collected from the online survey was processed with Microsoft Excel and then processed and analyzed with SPSS 20.0;

Group discussions were recorded fully and objectively, the data was selected and quoted in each part of the report to highlight youth's points of views.

1.7. Limitations of the survey

Online survey is limited to verifying the age of respondents in the age groups, which partly affected the quality and reliability of the survey results.

2. ONLINE CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOUR AND RISKS

2.1. Online consumption behaviour

In 2009, McKinsey introduced a new model called the Consumer Decision Journey to explain consumer behavior. This model consists of four main phases: Initial Consideration, Active Evaluation, Moment of Purchase, and Post-Purchase Experience. The striking feature of this new model is that it shows more iteration of the customer decision-making process through a loop. The purchase funnel method is a step-by-step journey with start and finish point. The McKinsey model emphasizes the cyclical nature of the buyer's experience, with a loop from post-purchase to another purchase. The Marketing Funnel model and McKinsey's Journey are the most popular marketing frameworks that have been taught and used by businesses ranging from Fortune 500 list of companies to small e-commerce stores.

However, the digital age has challenged this journey; and thus, consumers tend to make faster decisions with taking a lot of unlimited information every day. An article of Susan titled *"How consumer behaviors have changed in the digital age"* posted on the blog *"The next scoop"* analyzes the causes of change in consumer behavior such as business and the convenience of online consumption. In addition, the author also analyzes the role of influencers or bloggers together with the buying behavior of customers through articles describing product experience[1]. The change in customer behavior has brought challenges for businesses to meet stricter requirements of consumers as the author wrote *"customers are less tolerant than before and it is harder for the stores to meet their wants and needs"*. According to Susan, in order to address those challenges, businesses need to develop their brand names more and prioritize consumer center-based designs to bring customers superior experiences. Similarly, an article by James Patterson titled: *"The consumer buying behavior in the digital age"[2]* was published on Business 2 Community e-magazine analyzed the role of the internet and technology devices, especially smartphones with the change of consumer behavior and habits. Instead of going to stores and experiencing products, consumers can now sit at home and buy things via smartphones. Direct shopping at stores is just necessary for some cases. Consumers tend to use search tools to buy online and the phrase "near me" is especially chosen most to search for products and services when consuming online. Buyers make decisions to buy goods and services, basing on online reviews from previous buyers, friends, relatives, and influencers.

It means that consumers have several advantages to access and evaluate product quality before online consumption. The research conducted by Decision Lab throughout the country showed that product search channel may not necessarily be the purchase channel. For example, they may search for products on a website, but what

motivates them is Facebook's promotions[3].

The research by ISAAC indicated that most of the current online consumption activities are conducted on smart phones, computers, whereby the research suggests businesses should "focus more on online marketing"[4].

According to the report of the Vietnam E-Commerce White Book 2020 published by the Vietnam E-Commerce and Digital Economy Agency (the Ministry of Industry and Trade) in 2019, the e-commerce retailing revenue from Vietnamese consumers were about 10.08 billion USD, accelerating Vietnam's e-commerce growth in the top 3 countries in Southeast Asia. Most online consumers are young people aged from 18 to 25 years with 77% of internet users purchasing online products at least once in 2019 via mobile devices[5]. Moreover, due to COVID 19 pandemic in 2020 online consumption behavior drammatically increased. The latest report of Google in late September 2020 showed that the pandemic has become more complicated in the world, changing people's daily habits. 82% of respondents said that they bought online products during social distancing, of which 98% would continue to purchase online after the social distancing[6].

In Vietnam, according to a survey by Nielsen published in May, 2020, the number of online consumers increased by 25%, while that of consumers using traditional channels such as supermarkets, market, and stores rose to 7%, 3% and 6%, respectively. In this survey,

[1] https://thenextscoop.com/consumer-behaviors-changed-in-the-digital-age/

[2] https://www.business2community.com/infographics/
the-consumer-buying-behavior-in-the-digital-age-infographic-02122377

[3] https://marketingai.admicro.vn/hanh-vi-mua-sam-online-cua-nguoi-viet-nam/

[4] https://isaac.vn/hanh-vi-mua-sam-truc-tuyen-cua-nguoi-tieu-dung-nhu-the-nao/

there are about 55% of online consumers aged 18-29, of which 63% are women, 65% are office staff and 70% have high income. 55% of them purchased goods on mobile applications (mobile apps)[7].

The above information indicates the current trend of online consumption among youth that is noticeable for analysis. The research focused on adolescents and youth from 13 to 25 years old, on the basis of the input information, designed the survey and analyzed the causes of young consumer behavior and purchase decisions.

2.2. Online consumption risks encountered by youth

Since the outbreak of online consumption among youth, the analysis of online consumer behaviour indicates that apart from benefits, technology also inhibits risks to young online consumers. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2018 introduced the *"Toolkit for protecting digital consumer"*, in which the authors analyzed the risks encountered by online consumers, including commercial fraud in advertising, money transfer, or violating the consumer rights and responsibilities. Particularly, the toolkit emphasizes the risks of personal information loss, fraudulent use of personal identifiers, unsafe products, etc. It provides six basic principles that businesses should follow, including: fair business and advertising practices; appropriate disclosures; effective payment and transaction confirmation process; measures to address privacy and security; product safety in the e-commerce supply chains; access to mechanism and effective dispute resolution[8]. The document *"Children and Digital Marketing: Rights, risks and responsibilities"* published by the United Nations Children's Fund

[5] https://techfest.vn/tin-tuc/sach-trang-thuong-mai-dien-tu-viet-nam-2020

[6] https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-apac/marketing-strategies/search/vietnams-search-for-tomorrow-insights-for-brands/

[7] https://www.nielsen.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/06/VI-PR-Life-beyond-COVID-19-1.pdf?cid=socSprinklr-Nielsen+Vietnam

(UNICEF) in 2018 further analyses risks related to the children's rights in the field of digital technology, including the rights to privacy and personal information protection; the rights to free information access and opinion expression; the rights to being protected from commercial exploitation and negative marketing advertising that affects child development. This document also defines the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, including parents in the value chain of digital technology marketing. In addition, standards for digital marketing to children are also important and analyzed by UNICEF in the document[9].

Based on this analysis, the research framework of young online consumer behavior and risks is built as follow:

Young consumers in Vietnam (13 – 25 years old)

1. Online consumer behavior and habits (including behavior change in the COVID19)

2. Awareness of risks when purchasing online

---

[8] https://www.oecd.org/going-digital/topics/digital-consumers/toolkit-for-protecting-digital-consumers.pdf

[9] https://www.unicef.org/csr/css/Children_and_Digital_Marketing_-_Rights_Risks_and_Responsibilities.pdf

Response to online risks 3

Actions by the State, enterprises and young consumers to ensure the rights of young consumers 4

3. FINDINGS

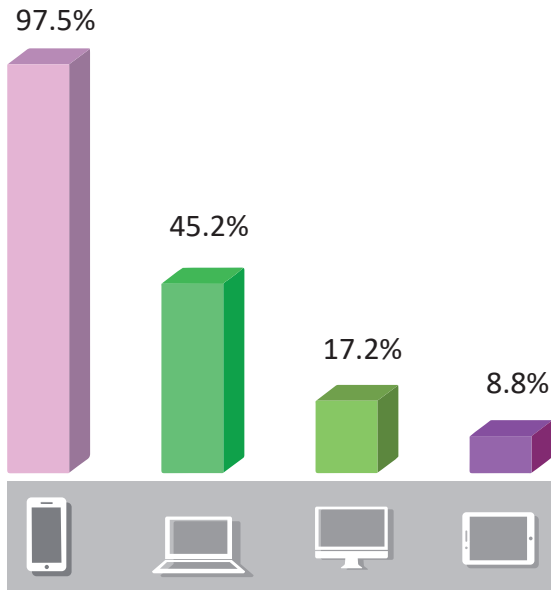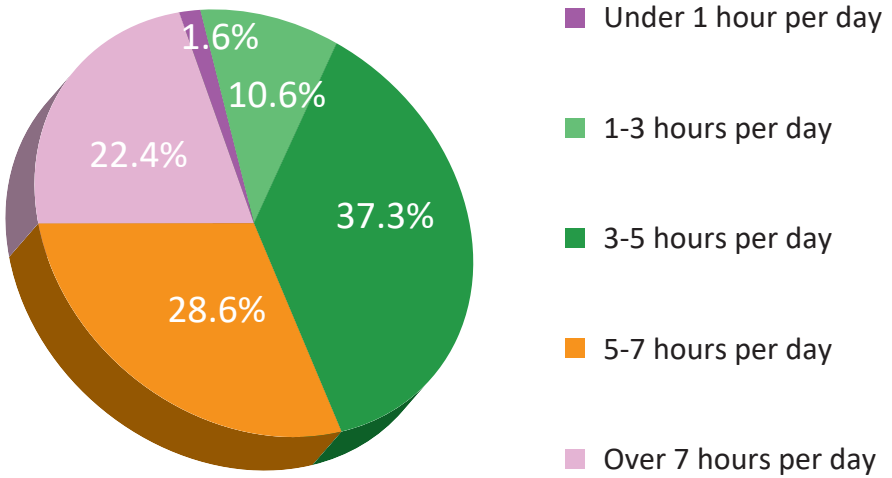## 3.1. Young consumer habits, behavior, and demand for online consumption

3.1.1. General information on young consumers' ages, internet usage frequency and purposes

Regarding age, more than a half of respondents started using the internet from 11 to 16 years old, and over 20% used the internet in the age of 5 - 10, even under 5 years old.

In regard to time spent on the internet, respondents tended to use internet through out the day, but mostly in the evening, twice as much time as other times.

The percentage of young people using the internet *under 1 hour* is very low (about 2%), in constrast, most of them spent 3 hours or more on the internet, particularly *37.3%* responded that they accessed the internet for *3 - 5 hours*. In addition, the rate of young people who were online for *over 7 hours per day* is also quite high, with *22.4%*. almost all respondents *(97.5%)*, used mobile phones to access the internet. About 50% of respondents used laptops as compared to the low rate of computer and tablet users (around 10%). It indicates that mobile phones and laptops are main devices for youth to communicate and study while desktop computers tend to be not widely used due to inconvenience; tablets have less functions and the price is rather high for young people.

Figure 1: Time spent on the Internet and Internet access devices (N=1,001)

- 1.6% Under 1 hour per day
- 10.6% 1-3 hours per day
- 37.3% 3-5 hours per day
- 28.6% 5-7 hours per day
- 22.4% Over 7 hours per day

97.5%
45.2%
17.2%
8.8%

Regarding Internet usage purposes, nearly 96% (with more than 950 respondents) of youth used the internet for entertainment purpose which is even higher than their study purpose with 83.5% though most of them are in school age. Another purpose surveyed with more than 50% of young people aged over 16 is friends networking and product consumption. In addition, 35% of respondents used the internet to search for jobs while a small proportion of them (16.7%) used the internet for business and other purposes.

Figure 2: Internet usage objectives of youth (N=1,001)
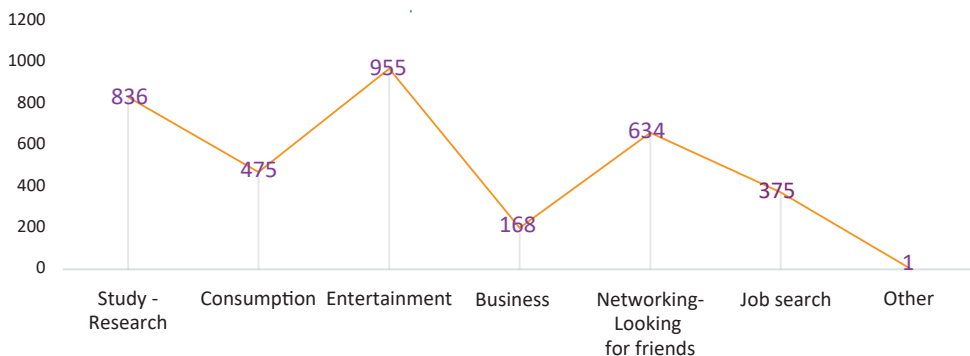
3.1.2. *Young online consumer behavior*
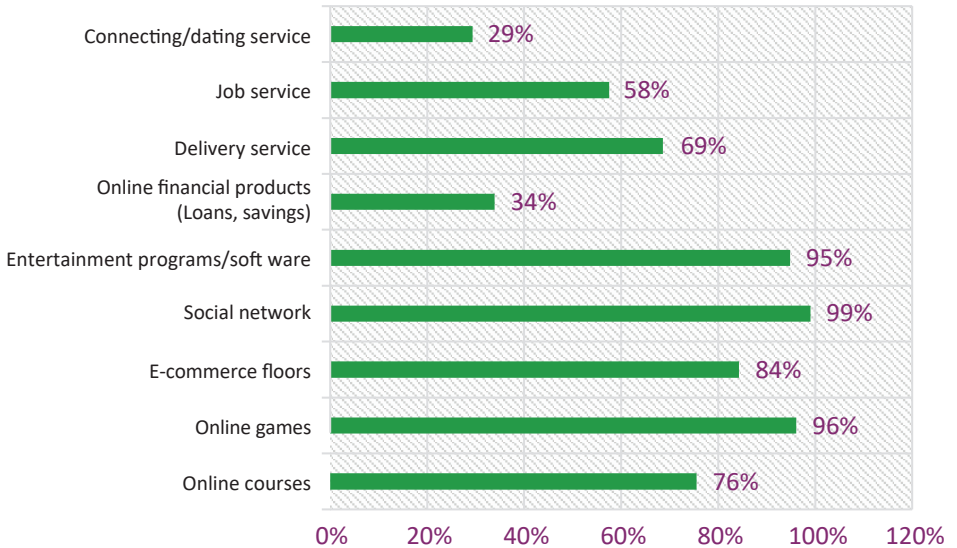
Online products

The survey results show that out of 09 online products/services, social networks were used by 99% of young consumers, 90% of respondents used them regularly. About 95% of young people used online entertainment programs, and video game. Particularly, 84% consumed products on e-commerce trading floors indicating the upward trend of "online markets" consumption.

Figure 3: Online products consumed by youth (N = 1,001)

Product	Percentage
Connecting/dating service	29%
Job service	58%
Delivery service	69%
Online financial products (Loans, savings)	34%
Entertainment programs/soft ware	95%
Social network	99%
E-commerce floors	84%
Online games	96%
Online courses	76%

Online consumption frequency

More than a half of young people surveyed *(about 52%)* sometimes bought online products, *27% never purchase online and about 20% often used the internet for online consumption/shopping.*

Satisfaction

In contrast to the very high demand for online products and services among youth, the proportion of young people who were not very satisfied and dissatisfied with online products/services accounted for more than two thirds of total respondents. Two products that most young people were dissatisfied are social networks (67.4%) and E- commerce trading floors (61.5%). Accordingly, 48.4% and 44.1% of youth were not very satisfied with job search service and delivery service respectively. Interestingly, two products that young people

rarely or never used are online financial products and networking/dating service, which were highly evaluated by 39.1% and 54% of young people respectively. The results open more rooms and opportunities for businesses in this sector to invest on product upgrade and development; however, they need to better ensure safety, convenience, and confidentiality for online consumers.

Table 2: Young consumer satisfaction with online products/services (N=1,001)

| No.	Products/Services	Satisfaction level evaluation			
		Dissatisfied	Not really satisfied	Satisfied	Not yet use
1	Online courses	68	258	509	166
2	Games	45	281	622	53
3	E-trading floors (Tiki, Sendo…)	38	239	614	110
4	Social network	17	191	783	10
5	Entertainment programs/ software	38	243	683	37
6	Online financial products (lending, savings, money transfer, securities,)	167	187	248	399
7	Delivery service	90	309	407	195
8	Job search service	104	313	260	324
9	Connecting/dating service	222	199	157	423

Youth's purchase decision

The top 5 factors influencing youth's purchase decisions are:

(1) Convenient payment method,

(2) Fast information processing (for example: fast order/service confirmation, search, etc.)

(3) Productdelivery/service provision modes;

(4) Prestige and brand names of businesses/e-trading floors;

(5) Easy- to- search products.

This finding is not the same as the previous surveys' results or theories on consumer behaviour analized in the Part 2 of the report, youth paid more attention to purchase experiences than product reviews and ratings. Products introduced by other customers or famous people were not highly evaluated by Vietnamese young people when they made purchase decisions. About 3 - 4 people in every 10 respondents highly appreciated this factor. In addition, though businesses invested a lot in *product PR/advertising*, this factor was not highly appreciated by the respondents. Only one in four young people considered it important. In group discussions, youth highly evaluated purchase experiences, payment methods, delivery service, etc. However, these factors were rated on the basis of product reviews of relatives, friends, famous people, and review websites. The survey results show that though the product reviews from different channels were not highly assessed they have become a trend in young consumer behaviour. In addition, e-commerce market is quite new in transition of traditional to online consumption and consumers are confused to make purchase decisions. The useful information provided by young people in this survey can be used for online product providers to improve payment methods, product search, order processing and delivery services.

## Figure 4: Factors influencing youth's purchase decision making (N=1,001)
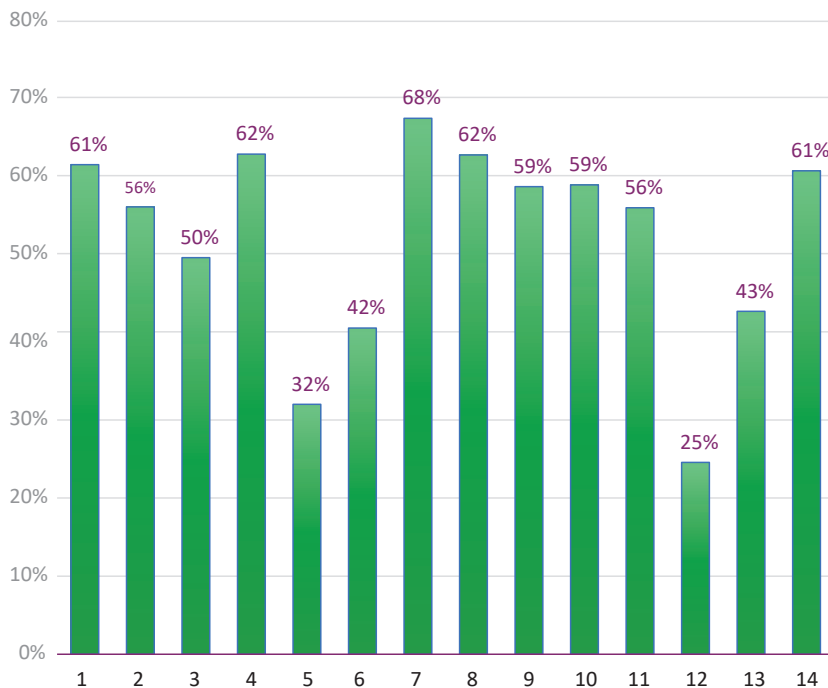
1: Easy to search for products
2: Easy and convenient to compare products
3: Nice, eye-catching interfaces
4: Fast Information processing
5: Score/Assess/Livestream by famous people
6: Score/Assess/Livestream by other customers
7: Convenient payment method
8:
9: Safety level in transactions
10: Promostions, sales
11: Customer care
12: Product PR/Advertising
13:
14: Business prestige and brandname

Sources of Reference

Most young people gathered sources of production information from the press including newspapers, online news, and teachers (over 80%). The product information introduced by idols/famous people was taken by 77.4% of youth, much higher than the rate of respondents (over 50%) who used product information from family members, or comparison websites (52.1%). Particularly, the information sources gathered from friends and social networks were underestimated, not reliable for youth to make purchase decisions.

Figure 5: Information sources for purchase decision making (N=1,001)
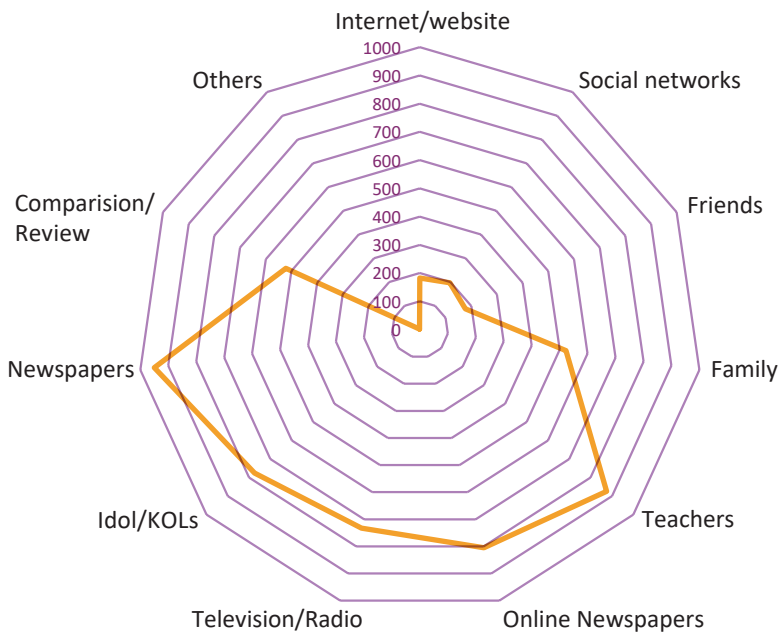

3.2. Online consumption risks encountered by youth

3.2.1. Youth's awareness of online consumption risks

In order to rate online consumption risks, the survey used a 1 to 5 scale to measure the ascending risks of 08 factors. As shown in

Figure 6, respondents seem to underestimate the online consumption risks. Out of 10 young people, about 3-4 people worried about high risks related to (1) ***counterfeit, poor quality products***; (2) ***product quality and design do not meet consumers' expectations due to inappropriate advertising programs***, and (3) ***being scammed to transfer money to a wrong account leading to money loss. Other risks were rated at a low level***.

Figure 6: High level of risks when consuming online (N=1,001)
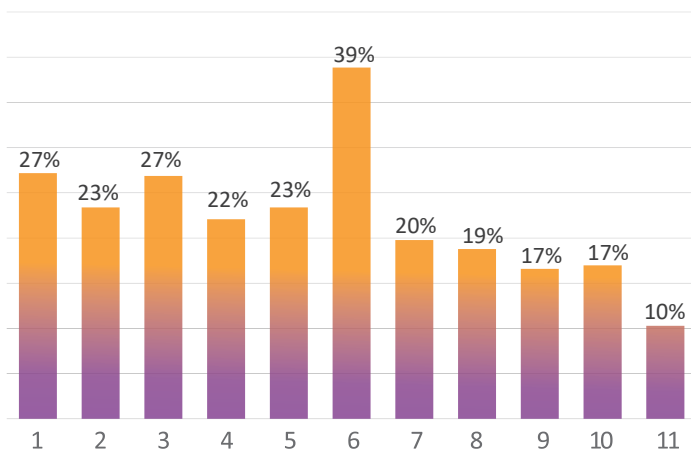
1: Product quality and design do not meet consumers' expectations due to inappropriate advertising programs that do not provide complete and truthful information about products.

2: Your personal information is lost, and therefore you are often disturbed by unwanted phone calls

3: You are scammed to transfer money to a wrong account, and thus lose money

4: Your personal images/clips are used for commercial or inappropriate purposes

5: Being viewed programs /advertisements that are not age appropriate or contain inappropriate contents and messages

6: Counterfeit, poor quality goods that are not traceable

7: Having sexual abuse while purchasing and/or booking services (words, images, ...)

8: Being bullied, violent, or seduced while ordering goods and services

9: Being scammed to borrow high interest rates online

10: Getting scammed into virtual currency purchases and sales on unregistered apps

11: Others

In regard to the frequency of online consumption risks, over two thirds of young people responded that they never or sometimes experienced risks when buying online products and services.

Some risks that young people have experienced include:

Risks of buying poor quality products that is not as committed on the website:

"I bought 2 products, one of which was usable but the other was not. I contacted the shop but they gave very late and perfunctory feedback and did not support product return or exchange". (Female, 19-22 years old).

"I placed an order on an E-commerce trading floor but the product received was different from the sample and of poor quality". (Male, 19-22 years old).

"I bought a set of clothes that was not the same as the photo posted on the shop's facebook page, I then contacted the shop but they did not answer". (Female, 19-22 years old).

"The programs earning money online are not really clear, information gathering process and gameplay instructions are too complicated". (Male, 23 – 25 years old).

"I bought an online product but it was not like the sample. Online books are usually pirated. Particularly, I ordered food and paid for both water and rice, but the shop delivered only rice". (Female, 16 – 18 years old).

"I used to buy cosmetics online and the products received were fake". (Female, 19-22 years old).

"Sometimes I bought a top-up voucher, card, or payment via sms to play game online but then the game crashed or was going to stop working". (Male, 16 – 18 years old).

Risks related to attitude and responsibilities of product providers:

"Delivery service was delayed but the service provider blamed on the customer and returned products to the seller without a notice. The transporter delayed and did not receive products, so the customer had to bring products to a post office".(Female, 19-22 years old).

"Customer service advised a wrong product to the customer but did not allow product return or exchange". (Male, 19-22 years old).

Risks of disclosing personal information:

"When I provided my phone number for websites, I didn't know they sell my information to a third party, then I often received calls from centers that I have never met online. They said I gave them my information". (Male, 16 – 18 years old)

"After I searched for an online product, my Facebook account or websites accessed would be full of advertisements for that product or similar one. My account might be tracked but I was not sure about it". (Female, 13 – 15 years old)

Being scammed while consuming online:

"When I was surfing my Facebook, I saw an advertising page of a shop offering an Xsmax iPhone as a gift on its opening day, so I followed their steps. 2 days later, they informed me that I won the gift so I was very happy. I was told that the gift was wrapped and the delivery cost was 200,000 VND. At that time, I was so happy that I fell into a trap. I sent 200,000 VND to their account, but they told me to send 500,000 VND for my document submission and that amount would be refunded later. I did what they instructed, and then they informed me the gift was sent to a post office near my house so I had to pay 1.5 million VND of the state tax. I asked my parents about it and knew that I was cheated". (Female, 13 – 15 years old).

In contrast to the subjective opinions of the respondents, according to the Authority of Information Security - Ministry of Information and Communications, Vietnam is one of the countries with a high rate of online phishing scams. The Authority also affirmed that due to the outbreak of 4.0 technologies, cyber attacks are increasing fast at about 300% per year and more rapidly during the COVID 19 pandemic. According to Viettel Cyber Security Data, only in March and April 2020, nearly 100 new fraudulent domain names were registered in relation to finance and banking, accounting for over 6% of scams. This rate increased to 27% in June and July 2020. Cyber security experts said in March, April, June, and July 2020, many Internet banking users were victims of online phishing attacks aimed to steal money from their bank accounts. Moreover, through the interview, the representative of the Department of Child Protection, Ministry of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs also affirmed that during COVID-19 pandemic, the National child helpline 111 received 300 calls from parents who were concerned and confused of their children accessing black websites while studying online at home.

In Vietnam, 21% of young people surveyed responded they were victims of cyberbullying and 75% did not learn about the child helpline or services that could help them in case of being bullied or violated online. Vietnam ranks the second in ASEAN for the high number of child abuse cases with images or videos on the Internet. The representative also stated: "This data may just be the tip of the iceberg because many parents and children are very hesitant and rarely call the National childhelp hotline 111 or relevant agencies to ask for help or report cases related to abuse, violence or frauds on the Internet". This is appropriate with the survey results of the Young Voices in Vietnam survey 2020 conducted by MSD and Save the Children. Out of 1,700 children surveyed, only one - third of children accessed the National child helpline and relevant agencies when they had problems of abuse and violence.

From perspectives of business representatives and experts, online consumers in general and young online people in particular often experience potential risks of identity theft, payment fraud, and fake news. Identity theft and payment fraud are quite common in transactions by youth, including online consumption, getting online loans, etc. For example, when young people buy online games, they can be scammed in various ways.

"Games usually link with shopping websites, Visa cards, and payment gateways including Viettel pay, Momo, etc. Payment gateways can be fake. Technology can be used to hack users' accounts to steal their information on visa/payment cards and money". (In-depth interview, business representative).). In regards to identity theft, a representative of a financial business (Fin Tech) said *"Fin provides online loans and electronic payment. Borrowers can access online advertising channels, individual lenders and QR codes scanning very easily. However, the internet is also a useful tool for scammers to deceive those who lack information. People can be attracted by advertising of unsecured loans, low interest loans etc. and provide their personal information of identity card, photo, phone number, address, even account information to borrow money. Some cases can happen as follows: First, scammers use your identity information to blackmail, commit inappropriate behavior and may hack your account to steal money. Second, you may be tricked into committing to a loan, though you do not yet receive money or receive money but that was deducted expenses and very high interest (for example, you borrow 10 million VND but only receive 7 million with the deduction of 3 million for other fees. A loan of 10 million VND is still recorded with very high interest). You will then be "wanted" to pay up the loan and after one*
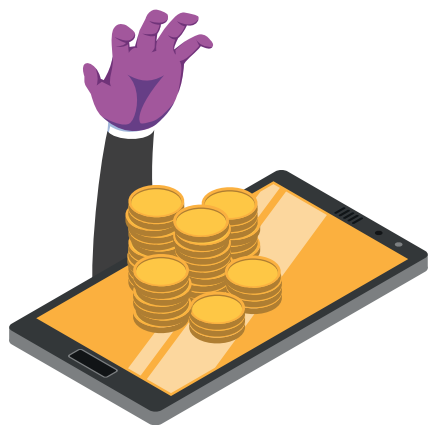
have to pay up to 13 million VND for the loan of 10 million VND (in fact, you received only 7 million), which means the interest is about 50% per month" (Group Expert discussion).

Fake news is also a risk for youth. A representative of a business providing education services and cybersecurity solutions affirmed that *"there exists fake news in every society. The internet is a new environment for spreading news better, faster, and easier. Vietnamese people are not fully aware of fake news and do not have critical thinking, so they are easily provoked to spread unverified information. Though individuals do not deliberately intend to defame each other, but they use this way to earn likes and views on social networks"* (In-depth interview, business representative).

Regarding false advertising, it is very dangerous for consumers to access false information about goods, particularly, products of medicine, health and education, culture. *"I have just read an advertisement about using oriental medicine to treat blood pressure, they say it is possible to cure high blood pressure, but according to Western medicine, this drug is very dangerous for the health of blood pressure patiencts"* (expert focus group discussion). The management of

fake news about product consumption has not been paid sufficient attention. A cybersecurity expert stated: *"Digital transformation has been of great progress recently. However, information security and safety has just been more concerned on political news rather than information about food and health"*. (Expert focus group discussion).

3.2.2. Youth's response to online consumption risks

To research youth's response to online consumption risks, the questionnaire was designed with several questions about reading behavior, production instructions and online consumption recommendations, over *40% of young people* only read some contents which they found important for them, *30.8%* read them through and *23.3%* read the entire instructions.

In response to risks, over *67% of youth wrote reviews on websites* and *53.5% sent their complaints to businesses or sale channels*; 3 in 10 young people asked friends for help, other methods were not used much, 16.1% of resp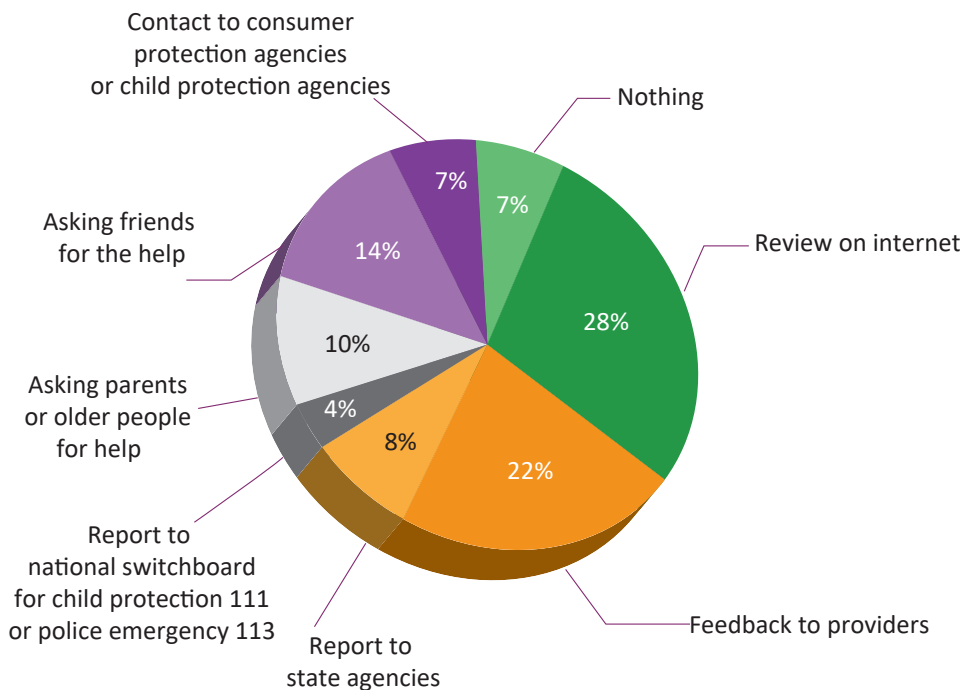ondents accepted risks and did nothing. *"I will contact with the sellers or accept a risk"*, another student said *"I won't buy and will find other stores"*. This is a common response of youth when experiencing online risks. (Group Discussion in Hanoi).

Notably, less than 20% of youth thought of reporting the case to relevant authorities, consumer protection agencies or child/youth protection agencies which is in line with the rate of 23.1% of respondents who studied legal documents related to online consumption, the rest of the respondents (nearly 80%) did not know or have never learned about these agencies.

"We do not learn about authorities, legal agencies in charge of protecting consumers because we have never been experiencing serious risks in our lives." (Group discussion in Hanoi).

"It is more difficult to give complaints to acquaintances" and *"it is quite troublesome to give feedback to authorities because of complex procedures".* (Group Discussion in Hanoi).

Figure 7: Young online consumers' reactions to risks (N=1,001)

Contact to consumer
protection agencies
or child protection agencies

Nothing

Asking friends
for the help

Review on internet

Asking parents
or older people
for help

Report to
national switchboard
for child protection 111
or police emergency 113

Report to
state agencies

Feedback to providers

7%

7%

14%

10%

4%

8%

22%

28%

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Actions from the state management agencies

Ensuring safety for young online consumers requires strict management and support of several relevant government authorities, including the Government, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Ministry of Information and Communications, and Ministry of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs, etc. Being aware of protection of children and young people on the Internet and online consumption, the state management agencies have made a lot of efforts.

For agencies responsible for consumer protection

The Government signed Resolution No. 82/NQ-CP dated 26th May, 2020 promulgating the Action program to implement Directive No. 30-CT/TW strengthening the Party's leadership and the State management responsibility for the protection of consumer rights.

The program aims to detail the tasks and solutions mentioned in Directive No. 30-CT/TW dated 22nd January, 2019 of the 12th Party Central Secretariat on strengthening the Party's leadership and the State management responsibility for the protection of consumer interests. The program set out 06 tasks and solutions, including:

1 *Strengthening the State management responsibility for the protection of consumer interests.*

2 *Strengthening legal frameworks, organizing a specialized system, clearly defining roles, focal points to regulate and monitor consumer protection activities; improving law enforcement capacity for cadres and civil officers responsible for protecting consumer interests; ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the State management for the protection of consumer interests.*

3 *Strengthening communication, education, and dissemination of policies and laws; information on quality of goods and services and warnings about risks for the safety of consumers on basis of openness, transparency and diversification of communication methods.*

4 *Strengthening inspection, monitoring, handling violation and support for consumers.*

5 *Promoting socialization, roles and responsibilities of organizations and individuals producing and trading goods and services, and social organizations in the protection of consumer interests.*

6 *Proactively integrating in international cooperation activities to protect consumers in ASEAN and international.*

The action program to protect consumer rights in the 2016-2020 period dated 8th June, 2016 also focused on:

1 *Disseminating policies and laws on the rights of consumers*

2 *Training and developing human resources to protect consumer interests*

3 *Building a system of call centers to advise and support consumers nationwide*

4 *Establishing conciliation groups to protect consumer rights*

5 *Building the national database and information system to protect consumer rights*

6 *Implementing enterprise-to-consumer programs.*

The two documents are very important but the consumer protection clause is quite general, unlikely to meet the requirements for online consumer protection in the context of digital technology development. Recently, the People's Committee of Hanoi has issued Decision No. 1517/QD-UBND promulgating a plan to promote the implementation of consumer protection activities in Hanoi in the period of 2021 – 2025. Apart from general orientations of the mentioned documents, the Decision added the item #7 protecting consumers in e-trading transactions and scientific – technological applications; stipulating a monitoring and management mechanism for activities of businesses in the e-commerce sector; protecting consumers and promoting multi-sectoral coordination between management agencies and social organizations to protect consumers.

Legal documents and national programs have not yet focused on e-commerce issues, young consumers hardly access information and protection. Therefore, they suggested some recommendations for consumer protection agencies as follows:

1 *Strengthen the management and monitoring roles of the government authorities in e-trading sector. In addition, the authorities should strengthen communication activities on their roles, responsibilities and obligations as well as provide information, knowledge for online consumers.*

"I do not learn about consumer protection agencies so I often report to the police." (Youth group discussion in Hanoi)

"Online businesses should be managed more strictly. There should be call centers or online market surveillance agencies to check product quality of online businesses regularly. All businesses should be reviewed. If a shop is rated with many bad reviews it must close or pay a fine to ensure the product quality".(Female aged 19-22).

"It is necessary to propagate knowledge to prevent the traps and tricks of fraudsters for young online consumers" (Youth group discussion in Hanoi)

"The State should promote communication and raise consumers' awareness of legal documents related to consumers, manage online businesses more strictly". (Male, 16-18 years old)

2 *Relevant government authorities including the Vietnam Competition and Consumer Authority should consider and simplify administrative procedures and the processing time for consumer complaints.*

"Do authorities address your complaints? The procedures are complicated". (Female, Youth group discussion in Hanoi).

3 *The state management agencies should narrow the scope of business operation, manage e-commerce trading floors strictly to avoid false advertising, extortionate prices, etc. and close e-commerce sites that do not have interaction or online ordering function. This will help reduce the opportunity cost of the time*

of consumers and businesses.

"Strictly manage the sources of goods of online shops to improve product quality and reasonable prices" (Male, Youth focus group discussion).

4 *The state management agencies should publicize lists of online service and product providers violating laws.*

"Authorities should publicize a list of suppliers providing poor-quality products". (Female, Youth group discussion in Hanoi).

5 *The state management agencies should improve appropriate policies, impose heavy fines on businesses causing harm to online consumers, especially young consumers.*

"In terms of law, it is necessary to develop legal documents to protect consumers, particularly in the context of boosting online consumption. In addition, the legal framework for online consumption should be completed to create a fair and transparent competitive environment among businesses. " (Female, 23-25 years old)

"Authorities should check online businesses before licensing them and regularly check registered businesses. Close businesses and impose heavy sanctions on poor quality product providers causing harm to the body and spirit of young consumers. " (Male, 16-18 years old).

For technology regulators and technology businesses

6 *The Ministry of Information and Communications should develop regulations, technology and applications solutions to support consumers.*

"A risk warning system should be built". (Male, 13 - 15 years old)

"Developing regulations of digital platforms and big data such as European regulations: https://digitalservicesact.eu/" (Female, 23-25 years old)

"It is necessary to enact laws, monitor and fine businesses, private companies that do not ensure the safety for children consumers". (Female, youth group discussion in Hanoi).

"Proposing businesses to coordinate and update information of the Child helpline 111 into the inquiry system on online sale channels to support young consumers better". (Female, 13 - 15 years old).

7 *The state management agencies including the Ministry of Education and Training should consider and adjust the school curriculum to help students access and practice digital and information technology skills for safe creative interaction on the internet;*

"We lack a lot of skills to survive in the digital age because digital theory and security are not taught in schools. Students in the 9th grade start studying digital security without online behavior. Parents and educators are reluctant to talk about sensitive issues such as online bullying, erotic texts, making friends on social networks, livestreams, location marking, critical thinking (the main cause to create fake news), applications on smartphones to avoid information theft, sexual harassment and respect copyrights, spend online time without affecting health, etc". (Cyber security specialist).

8 *The state management agencies should encourage businesses to develop and provide useful services and online products, technology solution initiatives, products of recreation, education and communication to support children to interact creatively and safely on the internet. Propose policies to encourage,*

support and manage businesses to implement cyber security standards for young people, promoting a movement for technology startups to create useful safety products for young people.

"There are 2 issues that have not been resolved: The International Code of Conduct with good, easy-to-understand versions has not yet been released by any organizations. The experts here can develop that document and a new safer internet platform. In addition, technical updates are also needed for education and training". (Representative of Information Security Association)

In response to these recommendations, in an in-depth interview, a representative of the Ministry of Information and Communications stated that the Ministry of Information and Communications has developed a program on child abuse prevention on the internet in 2021 and the program was approved by the Minister. Besides, the National Program on the Protection and Promotion of Children to interact creatively and safely on the internet in the period 2021 - 2025 is also being submitted to the Government for approval in early 2021. "Policies and programs should make comprehensive solutions from education, communication, prevention and intervention with the participation of all ministries, businesses, social organizations, media, schools, families, children, etc. The policy solutions are promising to protect children and youth from risks on the Internet and support the young generation – digital citizens using the internet effectively, taking advantage of the digital technology. In the first quarter of 2021, the Network of rescue, protection and support for children on the internet will be built". (In-depth interview, Representative of Ministry of Information and Communications). In addition, this representative also said that "The Code of Conduct will also be updated and revised (note: it was drafted and consulted in 2019 - early 2020) and will be released in the near future".

4.2. Actions from online businesses, product/service providers

1 *Businesses need to provide appropriate and transparent information about their business operation, products, conditions, and transaction methods, etc.*
"To ensure the product quality, consumers should be allowed to check products when receiving them" (Female, youth group discussion in Hanoi).
"Businesses should provide full information for the government authorities" (Female, youth group discussion in Hanoi).

2 *Businesses should have measures and solutions to avoid information and safety risks for consumers.*
"Businesses should ensure confidentiality and must not sell customers' information". (Female, youth group discussion in Hanoi).

3 *Businesses should ensure an efficient transparent and friendly process of payment and confirmation.*

4 *Businesses should implement child rights in business principles to ensure fair advertising and business; safe products (e.g. do not advertise, use unsafe supply chains for consumers).*
"All advertisements, including healthcare product advertisement, must comply with the advertising law. If an advertisement is false, it is illegal". (Representative of the Authority of Information Security).

5 *Businesses or online product/service providers should promote interaction and dialogues with young consumers to better meet their needs, provide timely support and solve their concerns.*

6 *Businesses should promote research on youth's needs to develop products and ensure safety, proactive interaction on the internet for youth;*

In response to these recommendations, a few interviewed businesses responded that they are working to develop solutions to ensure confidentiality and safety for online users.

"Businesses established a Fintech club with more than 20 members who regularly exchange and share technology initiatives to protect consumers and ensure the supply of fair services that can be accessible to all people. For example, conducting a customer behavior analysis and developing regulations of customer instructions and blocking suspicious transactions (E.g. for a 300 million transaction per month, the input and output source should be verifed) to save customers from fraudsters". (In-depth interview, Business Representative FIN TEC).

"We have very clear timing regulations for game players. For children, there is still a problem that child players may declare wrong ages and this is a technology challenge for us to find solutions. In addition, we also warn game providers about violent and agitated game programs. The team of KOLs / streamers (note: influencers, those who share games) are also trained in the cultural custom to deliver suitable programs. However, there are still problems that we are not able to handle". (In-depth interview, Business Representative working on Game).

 "In 2020, TikTok implemented new policies. For example, users aged 16 and over are allowed to send messages to each other to prevent manipulation, the Family Pair application (Parents connect with children) helps parents control the activities of children aged under 16 on Ticktok. Information Security Center, Tiktok collaborated with the Department of Child Protection

to link the child helpline 111 with a communication application for children to call the helpline in case of getting troubles. In 2020, we also implemented the Tiktok Transparency Report to provide full information about Tiktok's operations in Asian and global markets and will publish the Transparency Report every two months. In addition, we established the Tiktok Asia Pacific Safety Advisory Council including representatives of Asian leading experts in information technology, digital citizens, and protection of the rights of youth and children. Vietnam has a member as the Executive Director of the Sustainable Development Management Institute (MSD) to give us independent ideas on risks encountered by youth and we will improve our applications regularly. In 2021, we plan to promote communication and education campaigns for Tiktok users to ensure young users are safe and Tiktok is considered to be a positive social network". (In-depth interview, Representative of Tiktok Vietnam).

4.3. Actions from young consumers

1 *Research legal documents on online consumption to enhance capacity for preventing and minimizing risks when consuming online. The survey results show that a majority of young consumers have not experienced risks, and may leading to carelessness when consuming online.*

2 *Learn about online consumption risks and equip themselves with skills to deal with risks when consuming online.*

"We should read product instructions and requirements carefully before purchasing online". (Female, Youth group discussion in Hanoi).

3 *Proactively contact the government authorities when experiencing online consumption risks instead of accepting and doing nothing.*

4 *Learn and take advantages of the internet to study and develop themselves.*

"Young people need to adapt well so that they are not left behind. They need to study to gain knowledge and competence. Their knowledge should be applied in practice. They should learn data processing skills (SQR, Python...)". (Female, youth's representative, group discussion).

REFERENCES

1. Young Voices in Vietnam Report, Management and Sustainable Development Institute (MSD) and Save the children, the Labor Publishers, 2020. https://www.mckinsey.com/

2. https://thenextscoop.com/consumer-behaviors-changed-in-the-digital-age/

3. https://www.business2community.com/infographics/the-consumer-buying-behavior-in-the-digital-age-infographic-02122377

4. https://marketingai.admicro.vn/hanh-vi-mua-sam-online-cua-nguoi-viet-nam/

5.https://isaac.vn/hanh-vi-mua-sam-truc-tuyen-cua-nguoi-tieu-dung-nhu-the-nao/

6. https://www.oecd.org/going-digital/topics/digital-consumers/toolkit-for-protecting-digital- consumers.pdf

7.https://www.unicef.org/csr/css/Children_and_Digital_Marketing_Rights_Risks_and_Responsibilities.pdf

8.https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-apac/marketing-strategies/search/vietnams-search-for-tomorrow-insights-for-brands/

9.https://www.nielsen.com/wp-content/upoads/sites/3/2020/06/VI-PR-Life-beyond-COVID-19-1.pdf?cid=socSprinklr-Nielsen+Vietnam

10.https://techfest.vn/tin-tuc/sach-trang-thuong-mai-dien-tu-viet-nam-2020