BUS401 · RESEARCH METHODS · GROUP PROJECT I

Why do young Turkish consumers choose, stay with or leave an e-commerce platform?

A qualitative study of Trendyol, Hepsiburada and Amazon TR users

Eren Çalık with a five-person student team · ecalik.com

Kadir Has University · November 2026 · Public version, participants anonymised

KADİR HAS UNIVERSITY

E-commerce is now a fifth of Turkish trade

₺4.6 tn

e-commerce volume in Turkiye, 2025

19.3%

share of e-commerce in total trade, 2025

Why loyalty is the real question

01 A few large platforms dominate
Trendyol, Hepsiburada and Amazon TR sell largely the same products, often from the same sellers.

02 Prices and offers look alike
Sale days, free-shipping thresholds and memberships (Plus, Premium, Prime) are copied quickly.

03 Switching costs almost nothing
Young shoppers keep several apps on their phone and compare in seconds.

Source: T.C. Ticaret Bakanlığı (2026). Türkiye'de E-Ticaretin Görünümü Raporu 2025.

Four concepts guided our questions

RQ2

E-trust

Gefen (2000); Pavlou (2003)

Belief that the platform and its sellers will act reliably; lowers the perceived risk of buying online.

RQ1, RQ3

E-service quality

Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malhotra (2005)

Efficiency, fulfilment, system availability and privacy of the online service (E-S-QUAL).

RQ3

Customer loyalty

Oliver (1999)

Deep commitment to rebuy despite situational influences and competitors' marketing efforts.

RQ4

Brand personality

Aaker (1997)

The set of human characteristics consumers associate with a brand.

Used as sensitising concepts that shaped the discussion guide, not as hypotheses to test.

What we wanted to understand

Management problem

Turkish e-commerce is concentrated in a few platforms with similar products and prices. Switching costs are low, so platforms need to know what builds loyalty beyond discounts.

Research problem

We do not know how young consumers themselves explain their platform choice, how they weigh trust against price and convenience, and which experiences make them switch.

Research aim

To explore, from the consumer's own perspective, the motives behind e-commerce platform choice and the experiences that strengthen or weaken loyalty among 18–30-year-olds in Turkiye.

DESIGN

Exploratory, qualitative

Depth and meaning, not frequencies or generalisation (Malhotra, Birks & Nunan, 2020).

NEXT STEP

The themes feed the questionnaire in Project Part II.

Four research questions

RQ1	**Choice**	Which factors do young consumers name as decisive when choosing an e-commerce platform: price, delivery speed, returns, assortment, campaigns, app experience?
RQ2	**Trust**	How do consumers build and lose trust in an e-commerce platform and its third-party sellers?
RQ3	**Experience and loyalty**	How do negative experiences such as late delivery, fake or wrong products and return problems affect loyalty and switching?
RQ4	**Personality**	How do consumers perceive the “personality” of Trendyol, Hepsiburada and Amazon TR?

Semi-structured in-depth interviews

Why interviews

- Trust and loyalty are personal, experience-based topics that need probing
- A one-to-one setting avoids the group pressure of a focus group
- Projective techniques reach feelings people find hard to say directly

Malhotra et al. (2020); Saunders et al. (2019); sample size: Guest et al. (2006)

SAMPLING	Non-probability: purposive choice from our own networks (convenience), varied by main platform
SIZE	9 interviews, 25–35 minutes each, in Turkish or English, face-to-face or on Zoom
INCLUSION	Aged 18–30, living in Turkiye, 3+ online purchases in the last 6 months, used 2+ of the 3 platforms
ETHICS	Verbal consent on tape, voluntary, anonymous P-codes, recordings deleted after grading

06 SAMPLE

Nine interviews across all three platforms

Code	Occupation	Main platform	Online shopping
P1	Working student	Amazon TR	Opens apps every 3–4 days
P2	Student	Hepsiburada	About 75% of shopping online
P3	Working	Trendyol	About 70% of shopping online
P4	Int'l student	Trendyol	Rarely, mostly online
P5	Int'l student	Trendyol	3–4 times a month
P6	Working	Amazon TR	Only when needed
P7	Working	Trendyol	Weekly, checks apps daily
P8	Parent	Trendyol	Only when needed
P9	Working student	Trendyol	Several times a week

6

main platform Trendyol

2

main platform Amazon TR

1

main platform Hepsiburada

7 + 2

Turkish / international participants; 2 interviews in English

From broad to specific, the key question last

1	**Welcome and consent**	2 min	*"We are KHAS students… there are no right or wrong answers."*
2	**Broad icebreaker**	3 min	*"How does shopping fit into your daily life?"*
3	**Increasingly specific topics**	17 min	*"Imagine you need new headphones today. Walk me through what you would do."*
3b	**Projective techniques**	5 min	*"If these three platforms were people, what would each be like?"*
4	**Key objective, saved for last**	3 min	*"Have you ever stopped using a platform? What was the turning point?"*
5	**Closing and debriefing**	2 min	*"If you could give one piece of advice to these platforms' managers…"*

18 open-ended main questions with a–c sub-questions and neutral probes ("Would you explain further?"), following the course's five-step outline.

All four projective types from the lecture

01 Association
Word association

"Trendyol… Hepsiburada… Amazon TR. Tell me the first words that come to mind."

02 Completion
Sentence completion

"People who shop on Trendyol are…"
"The worst thing about online shopping in Turkey is…"

03 Construction
Cartoon test

Friend: "My order came late again, and it was the wrong size." What does the other friend answer?

04 Expressive
Personification, third person

"If these platforms were people, how old would they be, what job would they have? Which would be your friend?"

How we analysed the interviews

01	02	03	04	05	06
Familiarise	**Initial codes**	**Search themes**	**Review themes**	**Define and name**	**Report**

Six phases after Braun & Clarke (2006). Workflow: audio recordings → verbatim transcripts (names replaced by P1–P9) → starting code frame → coding in ATLAS.ti Web, cross-checked in NVivo via a REFI-QDA (.qdpx) project → themes.

Theme area	Starting codes	
Choice drivers	price comparison, free shipping, delivery speed, sale days, app habit, assortment	RQ1
Trust	reviews and buyer photos, seller badge, brand store, payment security, fake-product fear	RQ2
Experience and loyalty	returns, customer service, delivery failure, switching, multi-app use	RQ3
Platform personality	word associations, persona traits, friend vs. not trusted	RQ4

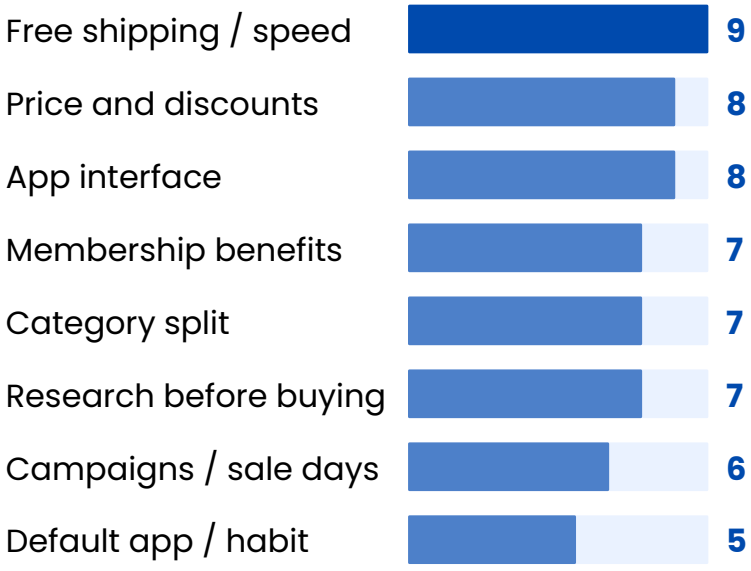
TRUSTWORTHINESS

- Coding, software set-up (ATLAS.ti, NVivo) and analysis: Eren Çalık
- Codes and themes reviewed by the whole team
- Every theme backed by verbatim quotes
- Audit trail of code changes

Lincoln & Guba (1985)

ATLAS.ti: how many of the 9 interviews raised each code

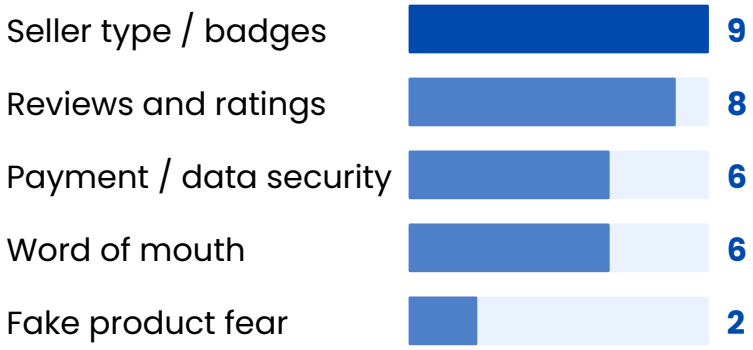
CHOICE DRIVERS



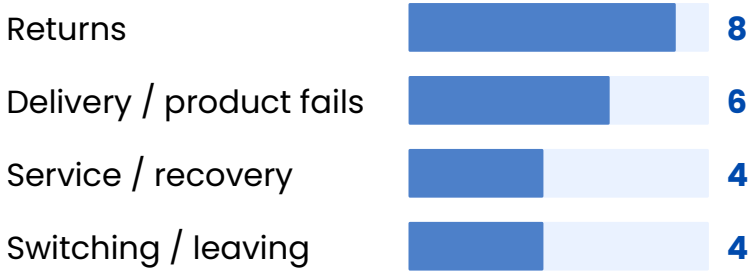
PLATFORM PERSONALITY



TRUST



EXPERIENCE & LOYALTY



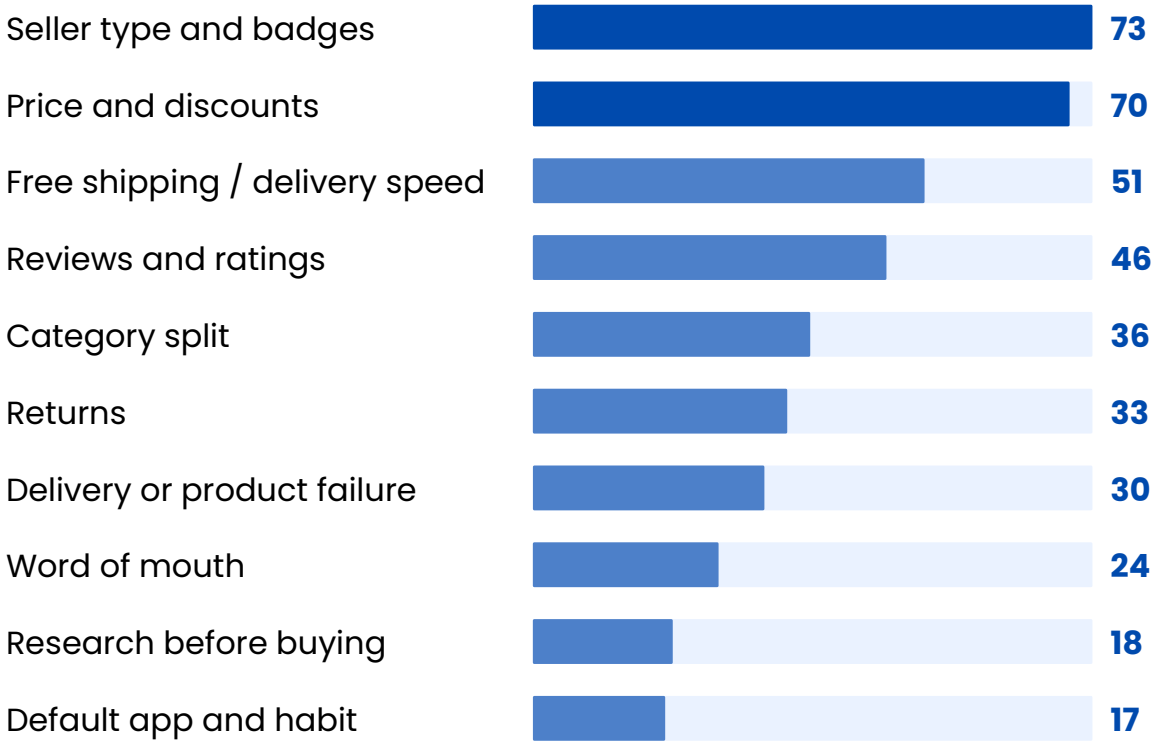
	P1.docx	P2.docx	P3.docx	P4.docx	P5.docx	P6.docx	P7.docx	P8.docx	P9.docx
App interface	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
Campaigns and sale days	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0
Category split	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
Customer service and recovery	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0
Default app and habit	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0
Delivery or product failure	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1
Fake product fear	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Free shipping and delivery speed	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Membership benefits	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0
Payment and data security	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0
Personification	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Price and discounts	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
Research before buying	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1
Returns	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
Reviews and ratings	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Seller type and badges	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Switching and leaving	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1
Word associations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Word of mouth	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0

9 / 9 interviews mention free shipping and seller badges.

ATLAS.ti Web Code-Document Table, project "BUS401 E-commerce Loyalty": 9 documents, 19 codes, 109 codings of participant answers. Coding and analysis: Eren Çalık.

NVivo: what participants talked about most

CODING REFERENCES PER CODE, TOP 10 OF 19





NVivo 15 Word Frequency query, 60 words (no Turkish stop-word list in NVivo, so some filler words remain).

WHY 109 IN ATLAS.TI AND 484 HERE

ATLAS.ti: each code applied once per interview, to the clearest answer. It shows presence (how many interviews).

NVivo project: every participant line that matches a code's keyword list is coded. It shows frequency (how much talk).

Project file BUS401_NVivo_project_v2.qdpx (REFI-QDA): 9 transcripts, 19 codes, 484 coding references from keyword rules on participant lines. Coding and analysis: Eren Çalık.

Everyone weighs delivery and price; habit picks the app

01 **A default app comes first**

Many open one "default" app first, often the one friends recommend; sale days rarely pull them elsewhere.

"Nedense bir bağım varmış gibi hissediyorum." "Somehow I feel a bond with it." P2, on Hepsiburada

02 **Each platform owns a category**

Many use Amazon or Hepsiburada for electronics, Trendyol for clothing and everyday items.

"Elektronik satışlarda bence çok daha güvenilir." "For electronics it's much more reliable." P3, on Amazon

03 **Free shipping, speed and memberships tip the balance**

Most say these decide between equal offers; Prime, Plus and Premium act as tie-breakers.

"Sırf o ücretsiz kargo hazzını yaşamak için… limitine kadar geliyorum." "Just for the joy of free shipping, I fill the basket to the limit." P2

9 / 9 free shipping or delivery speed

8 / 9 price and discounts

7 / 9 a category split between platforms

5 / 9 a default app or habit

Interviews in which the code occurs (ATLAS.ti, n = 9). Emerging code: research on ChatGPT or YouTube before buying (P1, P5).

Trust the platform, forgive good recovery

TRUST · RQ2

- Trust sits with the platform's guarantees: its own retail account, brand stores, verified-seller ticks
- Reviews are read, not just scored; many ratings beat a few (P5)
- Distrust often comes from other people's stories, not own experience (P2, P7)
- A few use virtual cards “to be safe” (P6, P8)

“Sadece puanına bakmak yetersiz, yorumların içeriğini de okumak gerekiyor.”
“The score alone isn't enough; you have to read the reviews.” P7

EXPERIENCE AND LOYALTY · RQ3

- One bad experience ends a secondary platform (P3) but not a favourite (P2, P3, P6)
- Service recovery decides: an apology coupon kept P8 on Trendyol; silence or refusals ended relationships (P2, P4, P9)
- Switching follows better service: P6 moved to Amazon for returns, P5 left Trendyol Go for an app that fixed the same problem

“Özür mahiyetinde bir hediye kuponu tanımladılar… arkasında durdular.”
“They gave a coupon as an apology… they stood behind it.” P8

FROM THE INTERVIEWS · P1

“Orada gezerken gerçekten kafam rahat oluyor ama Trendyol'da sürekli bir şey patlıyor gibi hissediyorum… ayırt edici unsur site tasarımı.”

“On Amazon my mind is at ease; on Trendyol it feels like something is constantly exploding… the differentiator is site design.”

If the platforms were people

Trendyol

The popular everyday shopper

big · discount · variety · convenience · "scam"

Seen either as young and dynamic (20s, social media, colourful) or as practical mid-life (a 38-year-old HR worker, a 45-year-old wholesaler). A friend for a few, but "be careful, many sellers". A polarised image.

"Trendyol'dan alışveriş yapan insanlar… indirim kovalayanlar."
"…discount chasers." P9

Hepsiburada

The dated relative, unclear identity

small · technology · fast · "alien"

Older and old-fashioned (50s–60s, a retiree with a side job) or a "colourful but naive child". The one most would not trust; barely known to international students.

"Renkli ama henüz toy."
"Colourful but still naive." P1

Amazon TR

The trusted professional

speed · trust · easy returns · global

A 30–45-year-old white-collar manager or tech entrepreneur; a conference speaker people gather around. The friend for most, though it "didn't really adapt to Turkey" (P5).

"Önemli bir konuda yardım isteyecek olursam Amazon'a daha çok güvenirdim."
"For something important, I'd trust Amazon more." P6

Loyalty is built on habit, guarantees and recovery

IN SHORT

- RQ1: Fast, free delivery and price matter to nearly everyone; habit and category fit decide which app opens first
- RQ2: Consumers trust the platform's guarantees rather than individual sellers; reputations spread by word of mouth
- RQ3: Loyalty survives one failure when recovery is good; poor recovery ends it
- RQ4: Amazon is the trusted professional, Trendyol the popular crowd, Hepsiburada dated and uncertain

ADVICE FOR MANAGERS

- Audit marketplace sellers and make verified badges meaningful
- Invest in service recovery: fast returns, real human (not only bot) support, apology coupons
- Offer support and couriers in English for international customers
- Hepsiburada: refresh the interface and own clear categories
- Trendyol: simplify the busy interface. Amazon TR: add local sellers and clothing
- All: reliable cargo and stable servers on sale days

LIMITATIONS

- Small purposive, convenience-based sample (n = 9)
- Two interviews in English with international students
- Ages 18–30 only, mostly Istanbul
- Self-reported, not observed behaviour
- Participants recruited from our own networks
- Not generalisable; the themes will shape the Project II questionnaire

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Thank you.

Questions?