The Primary Keys.
COS 221 Assignment 5
Task 1: Research

1. What Consumers Buy Online

Clothing and shoes are the most popular online purchases worldwide. In the U.S., 57% of shoppers bought clothes online in the past year, while 47% bought footwear. Electronics are also a big category, with 40% of U.S. consumers making purchases in this area. In Germany, fashion leads at 66%, followed by electronics (50%), and groceries—which saw a huge jump from just 7% in 2020 to 25% in 2024. Personal care products also grew significantly, doubling from 18% to 35% in the same period. Globally, 34% of shoppers buy something online at least once a week, showing how common digital shopping has become [1][2][4].

2. How Shoppers Compare Prices

Price comparison tools help consumers find the best deals by showing prices from different retailers in one place. Popular options include Google Shopping, Shopzilla, and Camelcamelcamel. For businesses, tools like 42Signals track competitor prices in real time, monitor stock levels, and even detect when sellers break pricing agreements. Research shows these tools make shoppers more likely to switch stores for a better price—especially those who are budget-conscious. Newer systems even use web scraping to provide instant price updates across major online stores [5][6][7][11].

3. Top Online Shopping Categories

Fashion is still the biggest e-commerce category globally, followed by electronics, books/media, and cosmetics. In the U.S., household appliances (27%) and furniture/home goods (19%) are also popular. Fast-growing niches include sports gear, toys, and DIY/garden supplies. Interestingly, over half of online shoppers (52%) buy from international retailers, proving that e-commerce has no borders [1][4].

4. Why User Experience (UX) Matters

A smooth, easy-to-use website directly impacts sales—better UX means more conversions, higher spending, and fewer abandoned carts. Studies show that poor design can drive away up to 80% of potential customers, especially if the checkout process is too complicated. Key features that improve UX include:

- Simple navigation and search

- Quick, hassle-free checkout

- Clear product reviews and ratings

- Mobile-friendly design
  Companies that invest in UX gain a long-term advantage because shoppers now expect fast, intuitive online experiences [7][8][9][10].

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