

Research Paper

Mobile Commerce Adoption and Sales Performance Among Informal Food Retailers in Yangon, Myanmar

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ABSTRACT

Mobile commerce (m-commerce) increasingly shapes how small enterprises in emerging economies reach customers and sustain sales, yet adoption among informal retailers remains uneven because of constraints such as trust, digital literacy, and infrastructure. This study examines the association between m-commerce adoption and sales performance among 120 informal food retailers across 36 townships in Yangon, Myanmar, using a Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-rank test to compare self-reported sales before and after adoption. Results show a statistically significant increase in sales following adoption, with average growth of 22% ($Z = -7.14, p < .01$); nearly 80% of respondents reported improved sales, and nearly one-third attributed more than 20% of monthly revenue to m-commerce. TikTok emerged as an important promotional channel, used by 35% of retailers. Findings suggest m-commerce functions as a practical, low-cost growth mechanism for informal retailers, with implications for platform design, digital-skills training, and inclusive urban economic policy.

Keywords: *Mobile Commerce, Informal Retail, Sales Performance, Digital Transformation, Myanmar*

Mobile commerce (m-commerce), defined as commercial transactions conducted through mobile devices over wireless networks, has become a prominent channel for retail activity worldwide, expanding fastest in economies where mobile penetration has outpaced fixed digital infrastructure (Schäfers & Blaschke, 2012; GSMA, 2024). For small and informal enterprises, m-commerce lowers barriers to entry: a retailer can take orders by phone or messaging app, confirm availability, and arrange delivery without a formal storefront or website (Hardaker, 2016). This is particularly relevant for informal food retailers, who make up a substantial share of urban economic activity in developing countries and play a central role in food access and employment, even though they typically operate with limited finance, weak supply-chain integration, and low technology adoption (Schäfers & Blaschke, 2012; ADB, 2024; ILO, 2025).

Myanmar offers a distinctive setting in which to examine this issue. It remains a mobile-first market with cellular connections exceeding the population, yet widespread mobile access has not translated evenly into digital commercialization, as low digital literacy, trust

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concerns, and infrastructure instability continue to slow adoption (DataReportal, 2025; GSMA, 2024). In Yangon, the country's commercial hub, informal food retailers increasingly use mobile calls, messaging apps, mobile wallets, and platforms such as TikTok to reach customers, yet most existing research addresses why retailers accept or reject mobile technologies rather than what happens to their businesses afterward. Empirical evidence on retailer-level performance outcomes, particularly sales growth, remains scarce in emerging markets generally and in Myanmar specifically. This study addresses that gap by empirically testing whether m-commerce adoption is associated with statistically significant sales growth among informal food retailers in Yangon, using a matched-pairs design that compares the same retailers' estimated sales before and after adoption. In doing so, it contributes performance-based evidence to the m-commerce and informal-economy literature and offers practical insight for retailers, platform providers, and policymakers seeking to support inclusive digital commerce.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mobile Commerce Adoption and Technology Acceptance in Emerging Markets

M-commerce is widely viewed as an extension of electronic commerce, distinguished by mobility and real-time interaction between businesses and consumers, and it enables transactions to occur anytime and anywhere, an advantage in settings with limited fixed infrastructure (Schäfers & Blaschke, 2012). Its expansion has been driven by smartphone adoption, falling data costs, and improved application ecosystems, with mobile devices serving as the primary gateway to digital services in many emerging economies (Chen & Kimura, 2020; GSMA, 2024). In Myanmar specifically, internet penetration and social media use have continued to expand, reinforcing mobile platforms as the dominant channel for online behavior (DataReportal, 2025).

Adoption research commonly draws on the Technology Acceptance Model, which identifies perceived usefulness and ease of use as central drivers of adoption (Davis, 1989; Tran, 2019), and on unified acceptance frameworks that add social influence, facilitating conditions, and habit (Venkatesh et al., 2003). For small and micro-enterprises, these perceptions are shaped less by the technology itself than by the everyday conditions of the business, that is, whether a platform fits existing routines, customer habits, and delivery capacity. In emerging markets, adoption is strongly conditioned by trust, infrastructural reliability, and regulatory quality (Thanabordeekij et al., 2020), and studies across Southeast Asia find that enterprises remain cautious despite broad mobile access because of concerns about payment security, transparency, and non-payment risk (Kyaw, 2020; Schäfers & Blaschke, 2012). For informal retailers operating on narrow margins, a delayed payment or unreliable delivery can directly affect daily cash flow, so perceived risk can outweigh anticipated benefit in low-trust environments (Pavlou, 2003; Venkatesh et al., 2012).

M-commerce, Informal Retail, and Small Business Performance

Beyond adoption behavior, a growing literature examines the relationship between digital platforms and small-business performance. M-commerce can reduce entry barriers by letting retailers reach customers without relying solely on walk-in traffic (Molla & Licker, 2005) and supports incremental scalability, allowing retailers to begin with basic messaging orders and later add mobile payments, delivery platforms, or social advertising as demand grows, a pattern that suits the limited resources and flexible business models typical of informal food retail (Kraemer et al., 2005). Associated efficiency gains, including faster order processing

and improved demand forecasting, may in turn support higher sales volumes and stronger customer retention in competitive urban markets (Wang et al., 2015; Sarin, 2020).

These dynamics are particularly salient in food retail, where perishability, quality control, and logistical complexity complicate digital adoption (Reardon et al., 2003), even as mobile ordering, digital payments, and delivery coordination have become more common within food supply chains, supporting just-in-time inventory management and reduced spoilage (Singh, 2016; UNEP, 2022). During periods of disruption such as the COVID-19 pandemic, mobile food-ordering channels helped sustain food access and retail continuity, reinforcing the relevance of m-commerce for both resilience and growth (Masias et al., 2020; Meng, 2021; OECD, 2020). More broadly, informal retail enterprises remain a critical component of urban food systems, providing employment and affordable food access, but they continue to face exclusion from formal markets and constrained access to finance and technology (Battersby & Crush, 2014; Webb et al., 2013; Williams & Nadin, 2012; ADB, 2024). Digital inclusion through m-commerce has been proposed as a pathway to integrate informal retailers into modern commercial ecosystems, including through flexible income opportunities for women-led enterprises, although platform-based work can also reproduce existing inequalities where digital skills and support systems are weak (ADB, 2024; UNCTAD, 2024; GSMA, 2024; IDRC, 2024). Despite this body of work, empirical evidence directly linking m-commerce adoption to measurable sales outcomes within informal retail, as opposed to adoption intentions or usage patterns, remains limited.

Social Commerce, TikTok, and Digital Inclusion in Myanmar's Food Retail Sector

Short-form video platforms have become an increasingly visible part of Myanmar's social commerce landscape. TikTok's video format, livestreaming features, and algorithm-driven discovery allow informal food retailers to advertise, communicate with customers, and build visibility at relatively low cost, with recent reporting indicating strong reach among adult, mobile-first audiences in Myanmar (DataReportal, 2025; Rendezvous Hub, 2025). Unlike conventional advertising, TikTok-based promotion depends on authentic, visual, and peer-influenced communication: food bloggers can show taste, preparation, packaging, and delivery experience in ways static posts cannot, which matters in food retail because purchase decisions often hinge on trust, perceived freshness, and social proof.

Although a substantial body of research examines m-commerce adoption, consumer technology acceptance, and platform usage in emerging markets, comparatively little empirical work has assessed whether adoption produces measurable sales improvements for informal food retailers, and this gap is especially pronounced in Myanmar, where existing studies have focused mainly on fintech adoption and consumer behavior rather than retailer-level outcomes (Kyaw, 2020; Thanabordeekij et al., 2020). By comparing sales conditions before and after adoption among the same retailers, and by capturing the emerging role of TikTok and food bloggers as promotional channels, the present study contributes retailer-level performance evidence that clarifies how mobile technologies, including social commerce tools, may support growth in a resource-constrained informal market.

Aim and Objectives of the Research

The aim of this study is to empirically examine the association between m-commerce adoption and the sales performance of informal food retailers in Yangon, Myanmar. In pursuit of this aim, the study addresses the following objectives:

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1. To assess whether m-commerce adoption is associated with a statistically significant difference in self-reported sales performance among informal food retailers, comparing the periods before and after adoption.
2. To describe the demographic and business characteristics of informal food retailers who have adopted m-commerce, and the communication, payment, and delivery arrangements they use.
3. To examine the extent to which retailers use TikTok and food-blogger promotion as a channel within their m-commerce activity, and its perceived contribution to sales.
4. To draw out theoretical and practical implications of the findings for retailers, platform providers, digital-skills trainers, and policymakers seeking to support inclusive digital commerce in urban informal markets.

METHODS

This study adopts a quantitative, matched-pairs design to examine the association between m-commerce adoption and sales performance among informal food retailers in Yangon, Myanmar. A quantitative approach was chosen because the central objective was to compare sales outcomes before and after adoption in a systematic, measurable way. By focusing on paired observations from the same retailers rather than comparing different businesses, the design isolates change associated with adoption itself while remaining feasible for a population that does not maintain formal accounting records.

Participants

The sample comprised 120 informal food retailers operating across 36 townships in the Yangon metropolitan area, including street food vendors, small grocery retailers, home-based food producers, snack and beverage sellers, and ready-to-eat meal providers who had adopted at least one form of m-commerce (e.g., social-media-based selling, mobile messaging orders, TikTok promotion, or third-party delivery platforms). Yangon was selected because it is Myanmar's primary commercial hub, has comparatively high digital exposure, and contains a dense concentration of informal food retail activity across markets, roadside locations, and residential neighborhoods. Participants were selected using a random, convenience-based approach designed to capture diversity in business size, product type, gender, and length of operation. While a larger sample would be preferable, 120 respondents is considered adequate for non-parametric analysis and is consistent with comparable studies of informal enterprises operating under access and security constraints. Table 1 summarizes the demographic and business profile of the sample.

Table 1: Demographic and Business Characteristics of Respondents (N = 120)

Characteristic	Category	%
Gender	Female	58.0
	Male	42.0
Age	20–50 years (majority of sample) ^a	N/A
Education level	Undergraduate degree	40.0
	Postgraduate	30.0
	Matriculation ^b	10.0
	No formal education	20.0
Marital status	Married	70.0
	Single	20.0
	Engaged	10.0

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Characteristic	Category	%
Business role	Owner	58.0
	Manager or supervisor	42.0

Note. $N = 120$. Percentages for gender, business role, education level, and marital status are as reported in the original survey. ^aAn exact percentage breakdown for age was not recorded in the original dataset beyond the stated majority range and can be added once supplied. ^bThe matriculation percentage was inferred as the remainder after the other three education categories ($40\% + 30\% + 20\% = 90\%$) and should be confirmed against the original dataset.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered through a combination of in-person interviews and online survey forms, which broadened participation while mitigating accessibility limitations. The instrument captured demographic characteristics, business profiles, m-commerce usage patterns, platform-based advertising practices (including TikTok and food-blogger promotion), and estimated monthly sales before and after adoption. Sales were recorded using categorical ranges rather than exact figures, because many informal retailers do not maintain formal accounting records and may be reluctant to disclose precise income; this approach improved response comfort while preserving data suitable for statistical comparison. The instrument combined multiple-choice and structured items to standardize responses while allowing reflection of practical business conditions, and a pilot test with a small group of respondents preceded full deployment to check clarity and consistency of wording and sequencing.

Data Analysis

Differences between self-reported sales levels before and after m-commerce adoption were assessed using the Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-rank test, a non-parametric method appropriate for paired, ordinal, and non-normally distributed data collected from the same subjects at two time points (Rosner et al., 2006). The null hypothesis (H_0) assumed no significant difference between sales levels before and after adoption, while the alternative hypothesis (H_1) posited a significant difference. Statistical significance was assessed at the 1% level ($\alpha = .01$) to ensure robustness of the results (Hayes, 2021), and analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 32).

Ethics

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee at the International Executive School, Strasbourg, France, prior to data collection. The research adhered to standard ethical guidelines for social science research involving human participants. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and no personally identifiable information was recorded or disclosed at any stage of data collection, analysis, or reporting.

RESULTS

Profile of Respondents and Business Characteristics

Female respondents accounted for 58% of the sample and male respondents 42%, reflecting the strong presence of women in Yangon's informal food retail sector, particularly in small-scale and home-based businesses. Most respondents fell within the economically active age range of 20 to 50 years. In terms of marital status, 70% of respondents were married, 20% were single, and 10% were engaged. Educational attainment was mixed: 40% of respondents

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held an undergraduate degree, 30% had completed postgraduate study, 10% had completed matriculation-level education, and 20% reported no formal education, meaning that 70% of the sample had attained some form of tertiary education. Fifty-eight percent of respondents identified as business owners, with the remainder holding managerial or supervisory roles, indicating that decisions about platform selection, pricing, and delivery are largely made by individuals with direct ownership or leadership responsibility.

Nature of M-commerce Operations

M-commerce adoption spanned several food categories, with snacks, ready-to-eat food, beverages, and freshly cooked meals constituting the largest share of m-commerce-enabled sales; wet food and fresh produce accounted for a smaller share, reflecting storage, cold-chain, and electricity constraints well documented in Yangon. Orders were received predominantly by mobile phone call, followed by messaging applications such as Viber and Facebook Messenger, indicating that m-commerce in this sector remains largely social-media- and messaging-driven rather than app-centric. Cash on delivery remained the most common payment method, followed by mobile wallets such as KBZPay and Wave Money, reflecting continued trust concerns, cash-liquidity preferences, and banking limitations. Thirty-five percent of respondents reported using TikTok to promote their products, either through self-created content or via local food bloggers, with orders typically confirmed through comments, messaging, or phone calls following video exposure. Delivery arrangements varied across self-delivery, third-party services, and hybrid approaches depending on distance, order size, and traffic conditions, underscoring the fragmented but flexible nature of last-mile logistics in this sector. Table 2 summarizes the channels retailers used for orders, payment, and promotion.

Table 2: Communication, Payment, and Promotional Channels Used by Retailers (N = 120)

Category	Channel	%
Order communication	Mobile phone calls (most common) ^a	N/A
	Messaging apps (Viber, Facebook Messenger) ^a	N/A
Payment method	Cash on delivery (most common) ^a	N/A
	Mobile wallets (KBZPay, Wave Money) ^a	N/A
Promotional channel	TikTok (self-created content or food bloggers)	35.0
Delivery arrangement	Self-delivery, third-party, or hybrid (varied) ^a	N/A

Note. N = 120. The percentage for TikTok use is as reported in the original survey. ^aExact percentage breakdowns for communication, payment, and delivery channels were not recorded in the original dataset beyond a rank ordering of most to least common; this row is included to show the intended table structure and can be completed once the corresponding figures are supplied.

Sales Performance Before and After M-commerce Adoption

Descriptive results showed an upward shift in reported sales categories after adoption: 79.2% of respondents indicated their sales increased "to some extent" or "significantly" after adopting m-commerce, while only a small share reported no change or uncertainty. For 32% of respondents, m-commerce sales contributed more than 20% of total current revenue, suggesting that for a meaningful subset of retailers, mobile selling has become a substantive component of overall business income rather than a marginal supplement. Table 3 summarizes these results.

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Table 3: Self-Reported Sales Performance Before and After M-commerce Adoption (N = 120)

Indicator	%
Reported increased sales ("to some extent" or "significantly")	79.2
Reported no change or uncertainty	20.8
M-commerce contributes more than 20% of monthly revenue	32.0

Note. N = 120. "Reported no change or uncertainty" is derived as the complement of the reported 79.2% increase and was not broken down further in the original dataset.

Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Rank Test

The Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-rank test yielded $Z = -7.14$, $p < .01$. Because the p-value fell below the pre-specified significance threshold ($\alpha = .01$), the null hypothesis of no difference between sales levels before and after adoption was rejected, indicating a statistically significant increase in sales performance following m-commerce adoption. The corresponding effect size, $r = Z / \sqrt{N}$, is approximately -0.65 , indicating a large effect by conventional benchmarks (Rosner et al., 2006). On average, retailers experienced estimated sales growth of approximately 22% after adoption, providing empirical support for a positive association between m-commerce adoption and sales performance among informal food retailers in Yangon. Table 4 summarizes the test statistics.

Table 4: Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Rank Test Results for Sales Performance Before and After M-commerce Adoption

Statistic	Value
N (pairs)	120
Z	-7.14
p	< .01
Effect size ($r = Z / \sqrt{N}$)	-0.65
Mean estimated sales growth	22%

Note. $\alpha = .01$. Effect size computed from the reported Z statistic and sample size; conventionally, $|r| \approx .10$ is small, $.30$ is medium, and $.50$ or greater is large.

DISCUSSION

The results indicate a clear positive association between m-commerce adoption and sales performance among informal food retailers in Yangon. The value of this finding, however, lies less in statistical significance alone than in what it reveals about how small retailers respond to market pressure. For many respondents, m-commerce was a practical response to customer expectations, competition, delivery demand, and the need to remain visible beyond the physical marketplace, suggesting that it is better understood as a market-access practice than as a stand-alone technology: one that helps retailers communicate, display products, confirm orders, coordinate delivery, and maintain customer relationships.

This interpretation is reinforced by the size and distribution of the sales gains observed. Growth of this magnitude is unlikely to reflect the platform itself so much as the combination of wider customer reach, faster communication, and a retailer's own capacity to manage the resulting orders; m-commerce functions as an enabling mechanism rather than an automatic driver of growth, a distinction consistent with technology-acceptance accounts that treat facilitating conditions and habit as co-determinants of outcomes alongside the technology itself (Venkatesh et al., 2003). This distinction matters practically as well as theoretically: if m-commerce were simply a technology effect, adoption alone would be

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sufficient to explain the gains, and the policy implication would be to maximize access. Because the evidence instead points to an enabling role, the implication shifts toward strengthening the conditions, such as order management, delivery reliability, and communication habits, that allow access to convert into performance. That a meaningful share of retailers now derive a substantial portion of their revenue from mobile selling suggests that, for this group, m-commerce has moved from a supplementary channel toward a core part of the business model, with real consequences for cash flow and stock planning in an environment where margins and buffers are typically narrow. For a retailer operating close to the margin, a mobile order that arrives without warning is not simply an additional sale; it is a claim on limited stock, packaging, and delivery capacity that must be met immediately, which is likely why the capacity to manage m-commerce, and not access to it alone, appears to separate retailers who convert reach into sales from those who do not.

This same logic extends to the specific channel that distinguishes this study from earlier m-commerce research in Myanmar: TikTok. Its emergence as a promotional tool adds a social-commerce dimension only beginning to be documented in this market (Rendezvous Hub, 2025), and its value appears to lie less in reach for its own sake than in its capacity to build the kind of trust that food retail depends on. Because informal retailers typically lack the certifications, storefronts, and brand history that formal businesses use to signal reliability, video content substitutes for these missing signals: showing preparation, packaging, and portion size in real time lets a retailer demonstrate trustworthiness directly rather than assert it. This helps explain why a platform built for entertainment has become a meaningful commercial tool in a low-trust environment, and it is consistent with wider evidence that visual, peer-influenced content builds confidence more effectively than static advertising in food contexts. At the same time, the results caution against treating visibility as synonymous with sales. Attention generated by a video or blogger collaboration still depends on a retailer's readiness to respond quickly, confirm orders, deliver on time, and handle complaints, so social media exposure complements operational readiness rather than substituting for it; a retailer who gains sudden attention without the capacity to fulfil the resulting orders may suffer reputational cost rather than benefit. This also bears on how the growth figure itself should be interpreted: because sales were self-reported rather than drawn from audited records, a limitation discussed more fully below, the results are best read as strong evidence of perceived improvement rather than a precise estimate of profit.

Why, then, do these gains vary so much across retailers? Part of the answer lies in structural constraints that visibility alone cannot resolve. M-commerce lowers the barrier to market entry, but it does not remove the everyday operating constraints, including unreliable electricity, unstable internet, small-order delivery costs, and limited complaint-handling systems, that continue to shape small-business performance (Schäfers & Blaschke, 2012; ADB, 2024). These constraints plausibly explain why some retailers report strong gains while others report only modest improvement, and they echo a broader caution in the informal-commerce literature that platform access alone does not guarantee performance gains (Molla & Licker, 2005). The continued preference for cash on delivery over mobile wallets reinforces prior findings that trust concerns, particularly about payment security, liquidity, and transaction reliability, remain central to adoption decisions in low-trust digital environments (Pavlou, 2003; Thanabordeekij et al., 2020), and in food retail this extends beyond payment to encompass hygiene, packaging, and a seller's willingness to respond when something goes wrong. Read together, the evidence suggests that the value of m-commerce depends less on the technology itself than on how well it is integrated into a

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retailer's wider operating system, including stock planning, packaging, delivery reliability, and communication, rather than functioning as a stand-alone digital channel (Kraemer et al., 2005). In practice, this means that two retailers with identical access to TikTok, messaging apps, and mobile wallets can experience very different outcomes depending on whether the rest of their operation, from ingredient sourcing to delivery logistics, can absorb the additional demand that digital visibility generates.

A related pattern concerns who stands to benefit from these dynamics. The strong participation of women in this sample is consistent with broader evidence that mobile platforms can offer women-led and home-based enterprises a practical route into urban markets without the capital or mobility demands of a physical storefront (GSMA, 2024; IDRC, 2024). This is a meaningful inclusion outcome, particularly in a context where women's informal enterprises have historically had limited access to formal credit and marketing channels. It should not, however, be overstated: access to a mobile platform does not automatically translate into equal benefit, and without targeted support, m-commerce risks reproducing existing inequalities by disproportionately benefiting retailers who already have stronger networks, better devices, or more stable infrastructure (Williams & Nadin, 2012). Because women-led and home-based enterprises are, on average, more likely to face exactly the infrastructural and capital constraints discussed above, the same structural gap that separates high performers from low performers in this sample may fall disproportionately along gender lines even though the technology itself is gender-neutral. This reinforces calls in the digital-inclusion literature for pairing platform access with digital-skills training and business-development support rather than treating connectivity alone as sufficient (ADB, 2024; UNCTAD, 2024).

Taken together, these findings make two contributions to the literature. First, they extend technology-adoption and informal-economy research by linking m-commerce adoption to a measurable performance outcome, sales growth, rather than adoption intention or usage frequency alone, which has been the focus of most prior work in this market (Kyaw, 2020; Thanabordeekij et al., 2020). This shifts the empirical question from whether retailers accept a technology to what that acceptance produces, and the results suggest that acceptance and performance are related but not equivalent: usefulness and ease of use may explain why a retailer adopts m-commerce, but whether that adoption translates into sales growth appears to depend on the operating conditions documented here. This is consistent with calls to read adoption frameworks such as the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) alongside the everyday realities of informal retail, including cash habits, delivery capacity, electricity, and trust, that determine whether perceived usefulness translates into sustained use and performance gains. Second, the study documents an emerging social-commerce dimension, TikTok and food-blogger promotion, that has received little empirical attention in Myanmar to date, suggesting that adoption and performance research in this market should treat social commerce as a distinct channel from more general m-commerce activity such as phone-based ordering, rather than folding it into a single construct.

These findings also carry practical weight for four groups with a stake in this ecosystem. For retailers themselves, the results suggest that the return on digital visibility depends on operational readiness as much as on promotional effort, which points to value in basic sales tracking, clearer order records, and improved delivery coordination alongside digital promotion, particularly for retailers using TikTok or messaging apps to generate demand they may not yet have the systems to fulfil consistently. For platform providers, the findings

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suggest scope for simplified, trust-enhancing features suited to micro-enterprises, such as clearer payment confirmation, dispute-handling tools, or lightweight order-tracking functions that do not require the technical sophistication assumed by many existing platform designs. For digital-skills trainers, the results support targeted, low-cost interventions, such as training in digital recordkeeping, safe online communication, mobile-payment confidence, food packaging, and complaint handling, that address the operating constraints identified here rather than focusing solely on platform use itself. For policymakers, the findings suggest that programs aimed at expanding digital access among informal retailers, particularly women-led and home-based businesses, are unlikely to be sufficient on their own; pairing connectivity initiatives with infrastructure investment, such as more reliable electricity and delivery-logistics support, and with business-development support would more directly address the constraints that appear to separate retailers who convert access into sales from those who do not (ADB, 2024; UNCTAD, 2024).

Limitations of the Research

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, sales data were self-reported using categorical ranges rather than audited financial records, which limits precision and may be subject to recall or social-desirability bias. Second, the retrospective before-and-after comparison relies on retailers' recall of pre-adoption sales, which may not fully capture seasonal variation or other concurrent changes in the business environment. Third, the convenience-based sampling approach, while appropriate given access constraints in an informal-sector population, limits the statistical generalizability of findings beyond Yangon's informal food retail sector. Fourth, the cross-sectional design captures a single point-in-time comparison and cannot establish the durability of sales gains or rule out reverse or confounding influences, such as concurrent changes in demand, competition, or macroeconomic conditions. Finally, the study did not measure costs associated with m-commerce adoption, such as delivery, packaging, or platform fees, meaning the sales growth reported here should not be read as a proxy for profitability.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies could address these limitations by incorporating longitudinal designs that track sales and profitability over multiple periods, by extending the analysis to rural and peri-urban informal markets to test the generalizability of these findings, and by using verified or triangulated sales and cost data where feasible to strengthen precision. Given the emerging role of TikTok identified here, further research should examine more directly how short-form video, livestreaming, and food-blogger content shape customer trust, purchase intention, and conversion among informal retailers, and whether these effects differ by gender, business type, or digital-skill level. Comparative studies across Southeast Asian informal food-retail markets would also help clarify which findings are specific to Myanmar's infrastructural and regulatory context and which reflect broader patterns of informal digital commerce.

CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence that m-commerce adoption is associated with significantly stronger sales performance among informal food retailers in Yangon, with an average estimated gain of 22% following adoption. TikTok has become a meaningful part of this ecosystem, used by over a third of surveyed retailers for promotion directly or through food bloggers. These findings position m-commerce as a practical, low-cost growth mechanism for informal enterprises, though benefits remain uneven and conditional on trust,

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infrastructure, and operational readiness. Continued support for digital skills, platform design, and inclusive policy could help extend these gains more broadly across Myanmar's informal retail economy.

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Conflict of Interest

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