

Research Article

E-COMMERCE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF COCODY: AN INNOVATION IN COMMERCIAL PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

An important driver of growth and job creation, e-commerce enables instantaneous commercial transactions regardless of distances and borders. The objective of this work is to present the functioning of online commerce in the municipality of Cocody. Achieving this objective required the establishment of a methodology that revolved around documentary research and field surveys. The combination of all these data collection methods yielded the following results. The actors of online commerce (e-merchants, e-customers and deliverers) in the municipality of Cocody are young people whose age varies between 25 and 30 years. They are therefore young single people with a fairly high level of education (higher level). Many products are sold and purchased, but the most frequent are clothing and household appliances, which represent respectively 49% and 26% of sales and 42% and 22% of purchases. For those who have already made an online purchase, the average frequency is at least once a month. The reasons for resorting to online shopping are multiple, but the most important are the lack of time and the ease of access to products and the level of satisfaction is average. The gains from online trading are enormous and range between 150,000 FCFA and 300,000 FCFA.

Keywords: E-commerce, Business innovation, Business practices, Abidjan, Cocody.

INTRODUCTION

Born from the meeting of IT and telecommunications, trends in online commerce seem to be confirmed in recent decades around the world. Between 2000 and 2010, the amount of transactions carried out on the Internet in the world more than quadrupled and that of purchases made from 2010 is estimated at some 24 billion dollars (Chaix, 2013). The International Finance Corporation (IFC), in its report on women and e-commerce on the continent, indicates that the number of online shoppers in Africa has increased by 18% per year since 2014. Driven by four countries (Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya), e-commerce in sub-Saharan Africa is expected to reach nearly US\$15 billion in 2022. In Côte d'Ivoire, e-commerce has been booming for more than ten years. This boom is partly due to the creation by the Ivorian state of the conditions for the emergence of this type of trade by the adoption of law no. 2013-546 of July 30, 2013 relating to electronic transactions. While traditional commerce remains strong among Ivorian buyers, who value negotiation and the interactions they have in the open market, the fact remains that the growing development of new information and communication technologies in the country is creating a shift towards online shopping. In Abidjan, people are increasingly using online commerce for the sale and purchase of products and services. If all the municipalities of Abidjan are affected by this innovation, the fact remains that the prize goes to the residential municipality of Cocody. This commune, which is designed to be the most modern in Abidjan and which is home to a population whose standard of living is relatively high, has a relatively westernized way of life. Habits in terms of buying and selling products have changed. E-commerce appears to them as a privileged way of buying and selling. However, despite the incrustation of this mode of trade in the habits of the populations

in this commune, the functioning of this activity seems to be unknown. There is therefore reason to ask how does e-commerce work in the economic space of the municipality of Cocody?

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Presentation of the study area

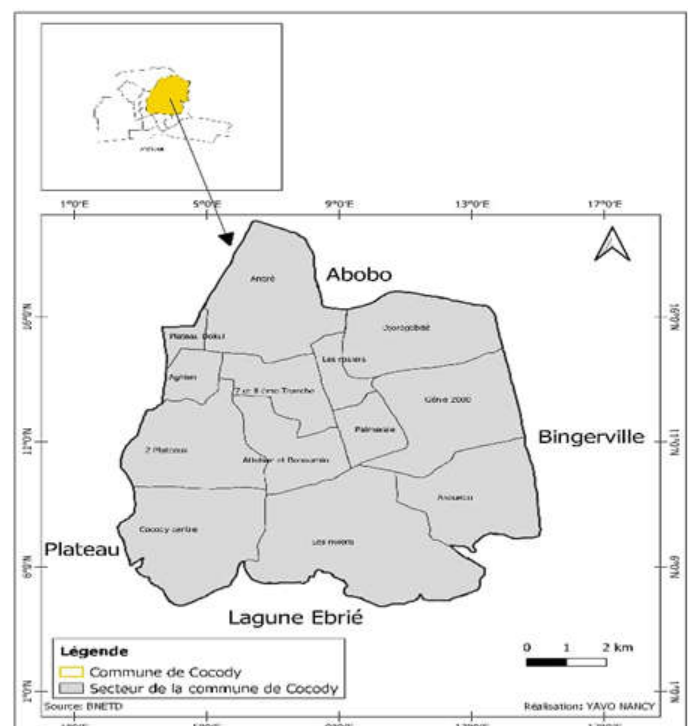


Figure 1: Presentation of the study area

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Located in the northern part of the city of Abidjan, Cocody is a residential commune known for the relatively high standard of living of its inhabitants and the modern architecture of its homes. Bounded to the east by Bingerville, to the north by Abobo, to the west by Plateau and Adjamé and to the south by the Ebrié lagoon, Cocody covers an area of 13,200 ha and has a population of 447,055 inhabitants (RGPH 2014). It is the third most populated municipality in the city of Abidjan after Yopougon and Abobo, which have 1,071,543 and 1,030,658 inhabitants respectively. Figure 1 below shows the location of the municipality of Cocody in the city of Abidjan.

Data collection methods and tools

For this study, two methods were used for data collection. This is the documentary research and the field survey which takes into account the interview, the observation and the questionnaire.

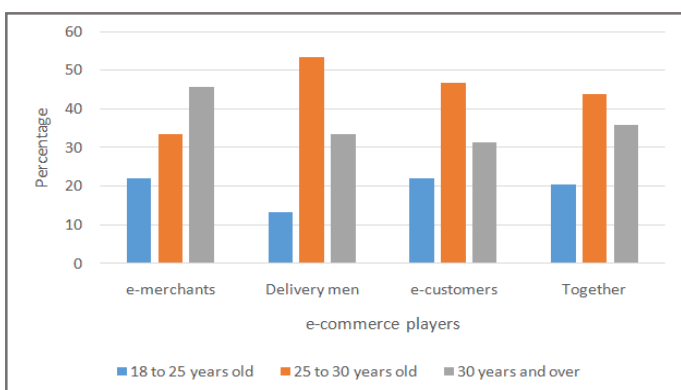
Documentary research, carried out in libraries and documentation centers such as the IRD (Research Institute for Development), the BNEDT (National Office for Technical Studies and Development) and the library of the Institute of Tropical Geography (IGT) and on the Internet, has provided an idea of the various works carried out on the theme of e-commerce. Press articles, scientific articles and memoirs formed the basis of this documentation. The observation, carried out in June 2023, made it possible to contact our study space. We were able, during this activity, to see the movements of the delivery men and the means of delivery used. The interview was an opportunity to meet delivery people and e-merchants in order to determine the socio-demographic profile of these actors, the reasons for carrying out this activity and the advantages and problems associated with this activity. The questionnaire survey, based on reasoned sampling, focused on heads of households living in the commune of Cocody. The sample size is 130 heads of household spread over the 13 sectors of the municipality. This survey made it possible to report on the products regularly purchased, the level of satisfaction, the problems encountered, the advantages linked to the choice of this type of purchase and the means of payment used. The combination of all these data collection methods led to results structured around the characteristics of the actors, the functioning and the socio-spatial consequences of online commerce.

RESULTS

**Socio demographic characteristics of e-commerce players
Actors dominated by young people with a high level of education**

To account for socio-demographic characteristics, we looked at the age of e-commerce players. The results obtained from our surveys made it possible to produce Figure 2 below.

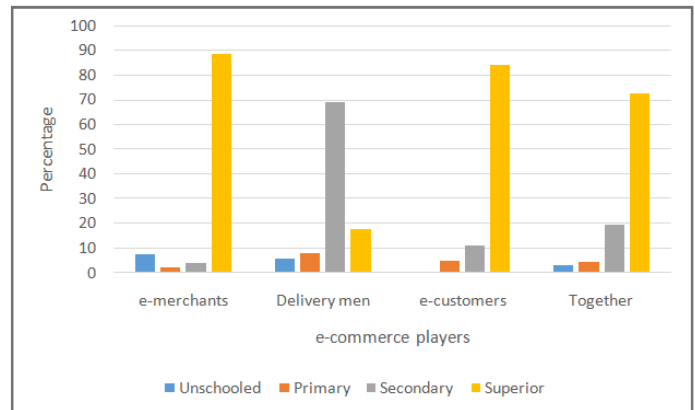
Figure 2: Breakdown of e-commerce players by age



Source: Our surveys, June 2023

Overall, e-commerce players in the municipality of Cocody are dominated by individuals whose age is between 25 and 30 years old. These represent almost 44% of the players. Individuals aged 30 and over are also important because they constitute more than a third of the actors. Unlike e-retailers who are dominated by individuals aged over 30, delivery people and e-customers are mostly made up of individuals aged between 25 and 30. The study also looked at the level of education of e-commerce players. The data collected during the field survey made it possible to construct Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Distribution of e-merchants by level of education



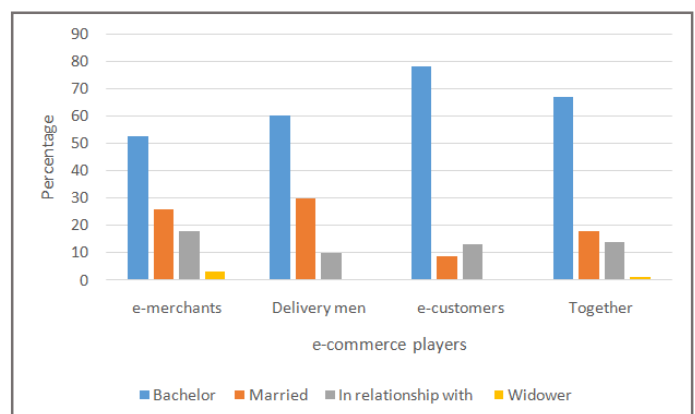
Source: Our surveys, June 2023

Analysis of the figure indicates that almost ¾ of e-commerce players have a higher level. Apart from the deliverers who have in their majority (68.89%) the secondary level, the e-merchants and the e-customers mainly have the higher level. Their share in this level of study is respectively 88.67% and 84%.

A marital situation dominated by celibacy

The data collected on the marital situation allowed the realization of figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Breakdown of e-commerce players by marital status



Source: Our surveys, June 2023

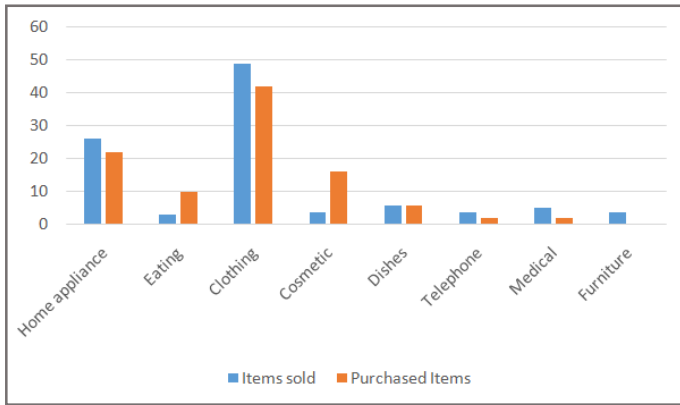
The analysis of Figure 3 shows a general dominance of singles. The latter represent almost ¾ of all the players. In this category, the most important players are the customers. They represent 78% of the players in this category. Married people, individuals living as a couple and widowers only constitute 1/3 of all e-commerce players. Married and cohabiting customers are very few, compared to single people. The combination of their shares represents only 22% of the whole. However, e-retailers have a somewhat high percentage of married people, couples and widowers. The cumulative share of this category

of traders is slightly below the average (47.3%). As far as delivery people are concerned, the share of married people and living as a couple is also high because it is slightly below the average (40%).

How e-commerce works Products sold and purchased online

Our work also looked at products bought and sold online. The data collected made it possible to produce Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Products bought and sold online



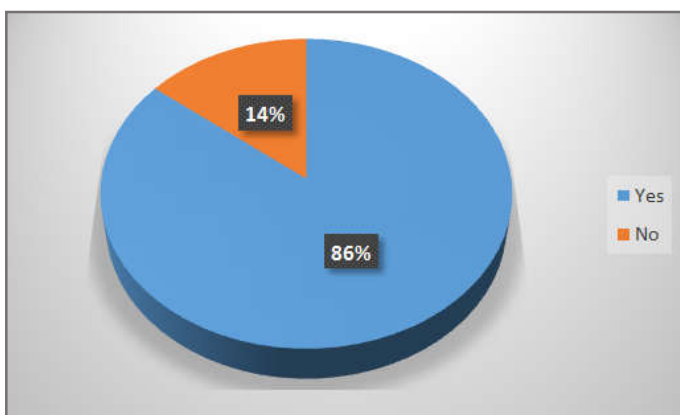
Source: Our surveys, June 2023

The two best-selling products in e-commerce are clothing and household appliances. Their shares in sales are respectively 48.80% and 25.90%. In terms of purchases, clothing, household appliances and cosmetics are the most popular. They represent respectively 42%, 22% and 16% of the products sold online. Unlike purchases, which are high, food products are sold very little by e-tailers.

Low online shopping frequencies

The survey also looked at the frequency of online product purchases in the municipality of Cocody. The use or not of the electronic system for the purchase of products is given in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Distribution of the population according to the use or not of online purchases

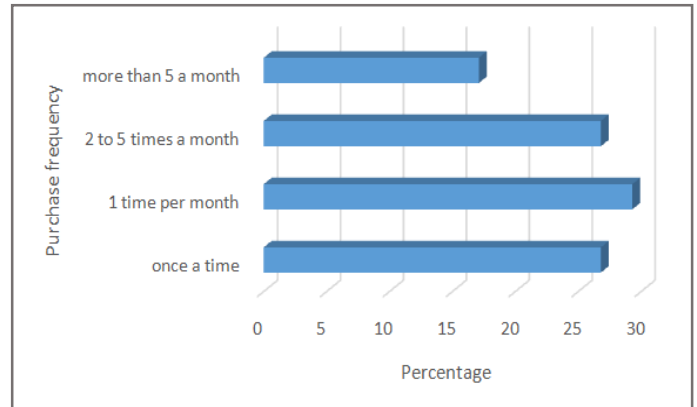


Source: Our surveys, June 2023

The figure shows that just over 1/10 of the population of the municipality of Cocody has not yet used the online system to purchase their product, compared to nearly 9 out of 10 people who have already used this system to purchase a product.

As for the frequency of purchase, the data collected made it possible to construct Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: Distribution of the population according to the frequency of online purchases



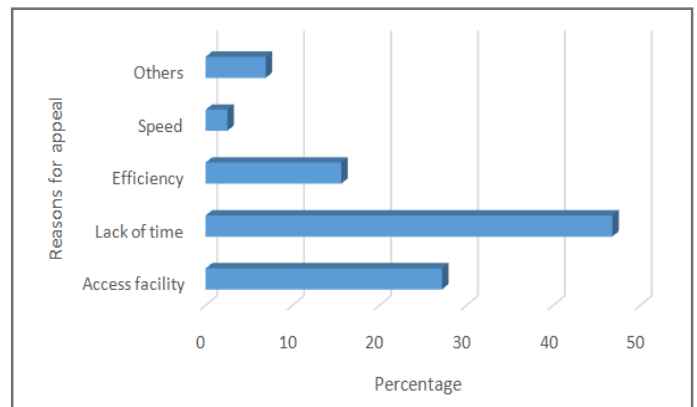
Source: Our surveys, June 2023

With regard to figure 6, it must be said that the frequency of online purchases is very variable. Among individuals who make purchases online, nearly 3 out of 4 people do so at least once a month. The most regular people, that is to say those who do it more than 5 times a month, represent nearly 1/5 of the whole. The group that concentrates the most individuals is that of people making purchases once a month. These represent 29.3% of all online customers. The less regular, i.e. people once a year, are just as numerous. Their share in the whole is about 27%.

Reasons for buying online and level of satisfaction of the population

The survey also focused on the motivations for resorting to online shopping and the level of customer satisfaction. The results obtained made it possible to produce figure 8 below.

Figure 8: Distribution of the population according to the reasons for using e-commerce

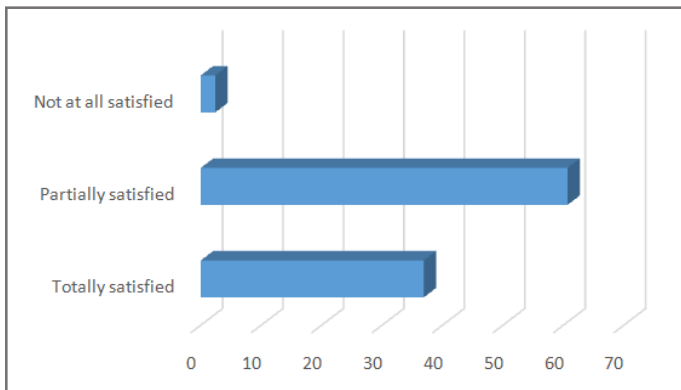


Source: Our surveys, June 2023

Lack of time is the main reason for resorting to online shopping. It is followed by ease of access to products. The efficiency and speed of the service are also counted among the reasons for resorting to purchase. Apart from these major reasons, it should also be noted the lack of certain products on the physical market and the ease of discovery and choice of the product.

Regarding the level of customer satisfaction with this mode of transaction, opinions are divided (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Level of population satisfaction



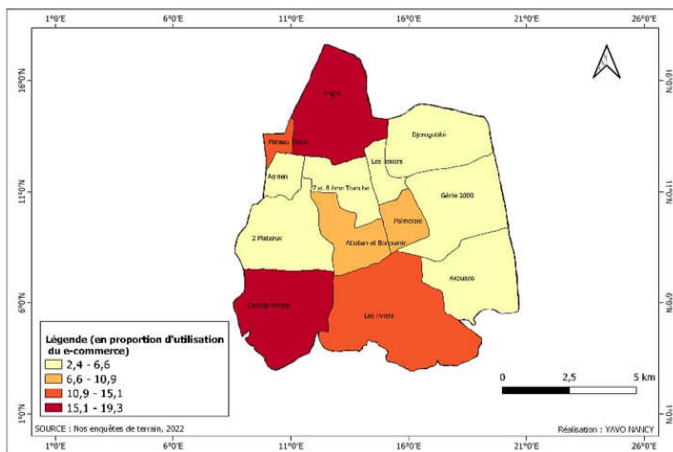
Source: Our surveys, June 2023

Almost the entire population (97.6%) is satisfied with products purchased online. Only 2.4% are not at all satisfied. Among the satisfied people, partially satisfied individuals are the most numerous. They represent 62.20% of satisfied people. Totally satisfied customers are not insignificant. They are just as numerous and represent 37.8% of satisfied people.

Socio-spatial consequences of online commerce
Customers unevenly distributed over the municipal area

Customers who are made up of the population are important players in online commerce. The level of use of this type of trade is represented by the map below

Figure 10: Presentation of the level of use of e-commerce

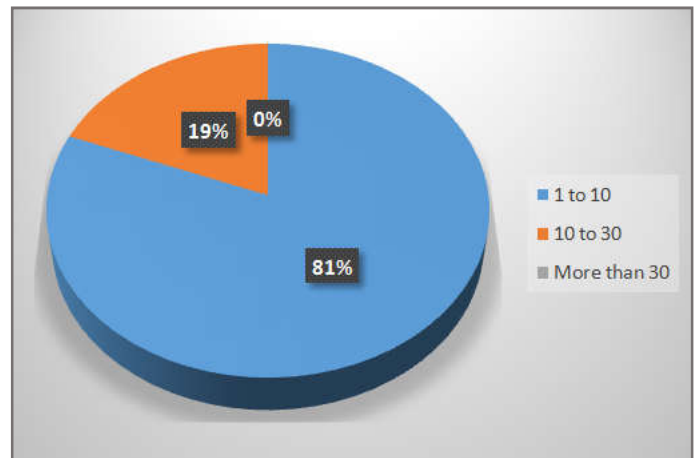


The northern and southern sectors of the municipality are the areas where the population makes the most use of online commerce to buy their product. Angré and Cocody center are the neighborhoods with a very high intensity of online shopping. The share of users of this medium in these two neighborhoods is between 19.3% and 15.1%. The populations of the Riviéra and Plateau Dokui districts come in second place with shares of between 10.9% and 15.1%. In the Attoban, Bonoumin and Palméraie districts, in the center of the town, the rate of recourse to e-commerce for purchases is low. Less than 1/10 of the population in these neighborhoods uses e-commerce at least once to purchase products. The inhabitants of the eastern, western and north-central districts of the municipality very rarely use online commerce to buy their products. These districts are Djorogobité, Génie 2000, Akouédo, The Oscars, 7th and 8th slice, Aghien and 2 trays. The share of the population as a whole is between 2.4% and 6.6%.

Online commerce, an income-generating activity

The survey of e-merchants focused on the number of items sold per day. Thus, the results obtained allowed the realization of the figure 11 below.

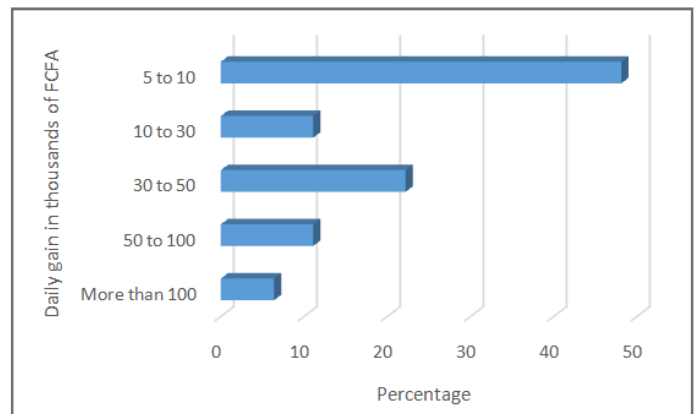
Figure 11: Number of items sold per day



Source: Our surveys, June 2023

The analysis of the figure shows that the majority of e-merchants (81%) sell between 1 and 10 articles per day and nearly 1/5 manage to sell between 10 and 30 articles per day. None of these online merchants can sell more than 30 items per day. As for the daily gain of online merchants, the data collected made it possible to produce Figure 12 below.

Figure 12: Distribution of e-merchants according to daily profit



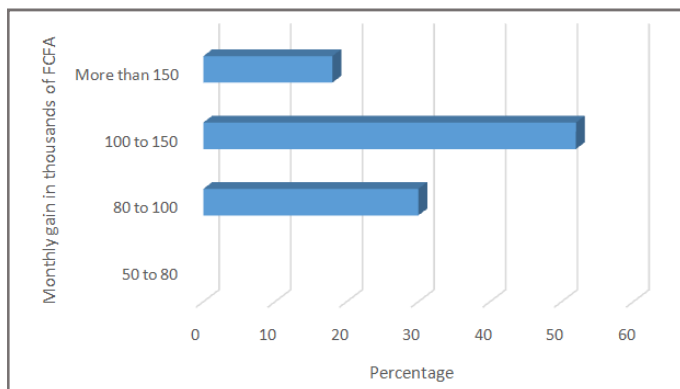
Source: Our surveys, June 2023

The results of our surveys indicate that nearly half (48.1%) of online merchants have a daily gain of between 5,000 F CFA and 10,000 F CFA. After the latter, come those with a daily gain of between 30,000 F CFA and 50,000 F CFA. They represent 22.2% of online merchants. It should be noted that some online traders have a daily gain of more than 100,000 CFA francs. They constitute 6.4% of the workforce of e-merchants. If we consider the modal class which is from 5,000 F CFA to 10,000 F CFA, we could estimate that the monthly gain of e-merchants is between 150,000 F CFA and 300,000 F CFA. These monthly earnings are well above the SMIG (Guaranteed Minimum Interprofessional Salary) which is set at 75,000 CFA francs.

The survey also focused on the earnings of those who serve as relays between merchants and customers, that is to say the delivery

people. The data collected from the latter made it possible to produce Figure 13 below.

Figure 13: Distribution of delivery people according to monthly earnings



Source: Our surveys, June 2023

Analysis of the figure shows that the modal class of this distribution is 100,000 F CFA to 150,000 F CFA. This class includes more than half of the delivery people. Thus, the majority of deliverers earn between 100,000 F CFA and 150,000 F CFA. The second class of gain that concentrates the most individuals is that of 80,000 F CFA to 100,000 F CFA. This class includes 30% of delivery people. Following these classes, comes that of more than 150,000 CFA francs which concentrates nearly 1/5 of the deliverers

DISCUSSION

E-commerce activities are carried out by several players who allow the dissemination of this activity. It is the e-merchants, the delivery people and the population (the customers) who present varied profiles. E-merchants are the primary distribution channels for e-commerce in the commune of Cocody. These are the online merchants. They are the ones who present the articles on the online platforms so that the customers make their choice. Without their presence, e-commerce would not be possible. E-commerce in Cocody is exercised by both sexes but with a slight dominance of the female sex. It is an activity dominated by individuals whose age is between 25 and 30 years old. It is therefore young people who are most interested in this activity. They have a very high level of study. 89% have a higher level. These results are confirmed by Liang Jian Sheng (1999, p.18) who argues that novelty attracts consumers. It makes it possible to capture new shoppers, to attract a clientele that is mainly young, graduates, with an innovator profile and with above-average purchasing power. The best-selling items on the e-commerce market in Cocody are clothing and household appliances, which is confirmed by the work of Aboubakar TOURE (2020, p.20) who says that while mass distribution is mainly dominated by food, Ivorian e-commerce is more positioned on electronics and household appliances. There are several reasons for buying online. It is the lack of time that is the main reason, the ease of access to the products and the efficiency and speed of the service. Apart from these major reasons, it should also be noted the lack of certain products on the physical market and the ease of discovery and choice of the product. Liang Jian Sheng (1999, p.18) confirms that electronic commerce radically reduces the economic distance that separates producers from consumers. The latter can make their purchases directly without calling on the usual retailers, wholesalers or even, in some cases, distributors. They benefit from better information, lower transaction costs and therefore lower prices, a wider choice, even the possibility of obtaining products adapted to their particular needs as well as

instant delivery for intangible services and products in digital form. On the basis of daily earnings, we estimated the monthly earnings of e-merchants between 150,000 F CFA and 300,000 F CFA; a gain well above the Ivorian SMIG (75,000 CFA francs). E-commerce is therefore a very profitable activity given the organizational conditions that do not require enough costs. Liang Jian Sheng (1999, p.18) confirms this by saying that e-commerce has many advantages for sellers. Producers can indeed access a global market without great difficulty. Stores or shops are no longer necessary and inventory management can be done more rationally. The savings on salary costs, on the other hand, can be considerable.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this work, it is established that e-commerce is a booming area in the city of Abidjan and particularly in the municipality of Cocody. The rise of online shopping and selling creates opportunities for millions of people and offers distinct benefits to those who participate. Opening an online store eliminates many of the boundaries associated with a physical retail location. E-commerce players have succeeded in establishing themselves in this area because it is very advantageous. E-merchants manage to sell many items and people manage to save time and money. Delivery people also make money from their many deliveries. However, the activity has enormous negative effects for both entrepreneurs and populations.

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