

Platform-Related Stimuli, Trust, Perceived Value and eWOM Adoption as Determinants of Purchase Intention in Content-Commerce: Evidence from Malaysian Generation Y Skincare Consumers

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Abstract

Purpose. This study examines how platform-related stimuli shape purchase intention among Malaysian Generation Y consumers in content-commerce. Drawing on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework and the Information Adoption Model (IAM), the study investigates a staged mechanism in which five platform characteristics—Information Quality, Service Quality, Convenience, Information Quantity and Perceived Ease of Use—influence two parallel psychological evaluations (Trust and Perceived Value), which subsequently operate on Purchase Intention through the adoption of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). **Design/methodology/approach.** A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was administered to 386 Malaysian Generation Y consumers with recent skincare-related content-commerce experience. Data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4, covering the measurement model, thirteen direct paths, two indirect effects and one moderation. **Findings.** The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity. Of the thirteen direct hypotheses, twelve were supported; the Perceived Ease of Use–Trust relationship was not significant ($\beta = .105$, $p = .050$). The five stimuli collectively explained 27.2% of the variance in Trust and 23.2% in Perceived Value. eWOM Adoption significantly mediated the effects of both Trust ($\beta_{\text{indirect}} = .070$, $p = .010$) and Perceived Value ($\beta_{\text{indirect}} = .085$, $p = .006$) on Purchase Intention. Gender did not significantly moderate the eWOM Adoption–Purchase Intention relationship ($\beta = -.209$, $p = .062$). **Originality/value.** The study integrates multidimensional platform stimuli, parallel psychological evaluations and an information-adoption mechanism within a single empirical framework, and provides emerging-market evidence that the conversion of platform experience into purchase intention is mediated by the adoption of eWOM rather than by exposure alone.

Keywords: Content-Commerce, Purchase Intention, Trust, Perceived Value, Ewom Adoption, Stimulus–Organism–Response

Introduction

Research Background

Commerce has been reshaped by successive waves of digital innovation. Widespread connectivity, mobile devices, digital payments, social platforms, artificial intelligence and platform-centred business models have progressively blurred the boundaries between communicating, being entertained, socialising and buying (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022; Verhoef et al., 2021). In its earlier form, online commerce functioned largely as a digital storefront: shoppers arrived with a specific purchase in mind, searched for items, compared prices and specifications, and then decided whether to transact (Laudon & Traver, 2024). Reviews and other forms of electronic word-of-mouth mattered in that environment, yet they typically sat at the edges of a transaction-centred journey rather than driving it (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Hajli, 2015).

Social commerce changed this configuration. By weaving communities, interpersonal influence, user participation and peer recommendation into commercial activity, it elevated trust, user-generated content and eWOM from peripheral factors to central explanations of online buying (Hajli, 2015; Ismagilova et al., 2020). A further step has been the fusion of social media with platform commerce—content-commerce—where discovery, exposure, interaction, entertainment, evaluation and purchase unfold inside one continuous content experience (Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020; Liu et al., 2023). Commercial messages and buying opportunities are no longer separated from media consumption; they are embedded in short videos, livestreams, tutorials, demonstrations, customer reviews, creator endorsements and algorithmically curated feeds (Sun et al., 2024). A consumer can move from idle browsing to evaluation and purchase without ever leaving the platform (Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020; Kim et al., 2023).

Compared with traditional online retail, this journey is markedly less linear. A single session may involve an algorithmically recommended product, a livestream demonstration, a scan of comments and reviews, an assessment of other users' experiences, an exchange with a seller or creator, and a completed purchase. Search and evaluation overlap rather than follow one another (Liu et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2024). For managers, this compression raises a new question: which platform conditions actually cultivate favourable consumer responses, since price and promotion alone can no longer explain content-commerce performance (DeLone & McLean, 2003; Parasuraman et al., 2005; Davis, 1989).

The expansion of content-commerce has been particularly pronounced across Southeast Asia. The 2024 e-Economy SEA report estimated that Southeast Asia's digital-economy gross merchandise value would reach approximately USD 263 billion in 2024, and identified video commerce as an increasingly important driver of online consumer acquisition and commercial growth (Google, Temasek, & Bain & Company, 2024). Malaysia represents one of the region's most dynamic digital-commerce markets, supported by high internet penetration, widespread smartphone usage and strong consumer participation in social commerce. DataReportal reported approximately 34.9 million internet users in Malaysia at the beginning of 2025, equivalent to a 97.7% internet penetration rate, together with approximately 25.1 million social-media user identities, equivalent to 70.2% of the national population (Kemp, 2025). TikTok's advertising resources indicated a potential adult advertising reach of approximately 19.3 million users in Malaysia during the same period (Kemp, 2025). More recent figures in

Digital 2026: Malaysia indicate that internet use continued to expand to approximately 35.4 million users and 98.0% penetration by October 2025, with an estimated 30.7 million social-media user identities (Kemp, 2026). These figures should be interpreted as platform-reported audience or identity estimates rather than exact counts of unique consumers, but they nevertheless demonstrate the extensive role of digital and social platforms in Malaysian society.

Malaysia's digital transformation is further supported by government policy, including the Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint associated with the MyDIGITAL initiative and the Malaysia Digital national strategic initiative led by the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (Economic Planning Unit, 2021; Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation, 2025). These policies position digitalisation as a foundation for economic growth, business innovation and social inclusion. At the same time, digital growth introduces managerial and public-policy concerns, including the need for reliable information, secure transactions, transparent marketing, effective dispute resolution and trustworthy recommendation systems, because the rapid circulation of sponsored content, creator endorsements and algorithmically promoted commercial information may make it difficult for consumers to distinguish authentic experiences from paid persuasion (Campbell & Grimm, 2019; Boerman, 2020).

Within the broader content-commerce market, skincare products constitute an appropriate empirical context for examining platform-related consumer decision-making. Compared with many low-involvement products, skincare purchases require consumers to evaluate multiple attributes, including ingredients, expected benefits, skin-type compatibility, usage procedures, possible irritation, brand reputation, authenticity, safety and price (Isa et al., 2023; Sanny et al., 2020). Skincare products also contain important experience and credence attributes: certain characteristics can be evaluated before purchase, whereas comfort, skin compatibility, irritation risk and longer-term effectiveness may become evident only after use, and some claims may remain difficult to verify even after consumption (Darby & Karni, 1973; Nelson, 1970). This uncertainty increases consumers' dependence on external information and the experiences of other users (Filiari, 2015; Ismagilova et al., 2020). Malaysian skincare evaluation is additionally influenced by cultural and religious considerations such as halal status, ingredient transparency and brand origin (Isa et al., 2023). These characteristics make skincare a theoretically suitable category for examining how platform-related conditions shape consumer evaluations and purchasing intentions (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010).

The empirical relevance of information reliability in Malaysian skincare commerce is reinforced by the regulatory environment and by documented consumer-safety concerns. Cosmetic products in Malaysia are governed by the Control of Drugs and Cosmetics Regulations 1984, under which products are subject to a notification system administered by the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPRA) (National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency, 2026). The Ministry of Health has on multiple occasions cancelled the notification of cosmetic products found to contain scheduled poisons such as mercury, hydroquinone, tretinoin and betamethasone 17-valerate, substances whose unsupervised use can produce serious adverse effects, including skin damage and systemic health risks (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2024). These enforcement actions illustrate that skincare purchasing in Malaysia carries non-trivial health and safety implications, and that the accuracy and trustworthiness of the information consumers encounter online is consequential well beyond commercial

outcomes. For platform operators, brands and sellers, these conditions reinforce the need for verifiable product information, authentic reviews and responsible eWOM, because misleading or non-compliant skincare promotion may expose consumers to material harm. The present study therefore examines a product category in which information quality, trust and the adoption of reliable eWOM are not merely marketing considerations but consumer-protection concerns.

Against this background, the present study focuses on a specific configuration of platform conditions and consumer responses. Building on the SOR framework, five platform-related characteristics—Information Quality, Service Quality, Convenience, Information Quantity and Perceived Ease of Use—are examined as environmental stimuli; two psychological evaluations—Trust and Perceived Value—are examined as organism states; and the adoption of electronic word-of-mouth is examined as the information-adoption mechanism through which these evaluations influence Purchase Intention. Each of these constructs has been shown, in fragmented form, to matter for online consumer behaviour, yet their joint operation within a single content-commerce framework has rarely been tested empirically in Malaysia (Dhaigude & Mohan, 2023). The concentration of skincare commerce within content-driven platforms makes this configuration particularly consequential: because skincare products carry experience and credence attributes, consumers depend disproportionately on platform information, service assurances, convenience and the experiences of other users when forming purchase decisions. Examining how these conditions jointly convert platform engagement into purchase intention therefore addresses a question of direct theoretical and managerial significance for one of Malaysia's fastest-growing digital-commerce categories

Problem Statement

In Malaysia, however, the mechanisms that convert content-commerce engagement into purchase intention remain only partially understood. Watching, liking, commenting on or sharing skincare content does not, in itself, produce purchase intention: a consumer may engage with such content while doubting the platform environment, questioning the value of the transaction, ignoring the eWOM encountered, or having no intention to buy (Liu et al., 2023). For platform operators and skincare brands, attracting attention is therefore the lesser problem; the harder task is converting content exposure into favourable evaluations, adopted information and behavioural intention (Dhaigude & Mohan, 2023).

Beyond this core problem, two complications deserve emphasis. One concerns the multidimensionality of the platform environment: consumers rarely weigh a single platform characteristic in isolation; instead, they judge simultaneously whether the available information is accurate and useful, whether enough of it is provided, whether the platform and its sellers deliver dependable service, whether buying is convenient, and whether the interface is easy to operate. Yet earlier work has tended to study isolated characteristics or narrowly circumscribed customer experiences rather than combining information-, service-, convenience- and technology-related conditions within one explanatory framework (Dhaigude & Mohan, 2023). The other complication concerns mechanism: how these characteristics translate into purchase intention is still poorly understood. Direct stimulus–response links are unlikely; consumers first assess whether the environment merits trust and delivers value, and being exposed to eWOM is not the same as adopting it (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Sussman & Siegal, 2003; Verma et al., 2023).

Research Gaps

Five research gaps collectively justify the present study. **First**, a substantial proportion of contemporary social-commerce and livestream-commerce research has been conducted in major Asian and international markets—particularly China—whereas integrated evidence from Malaysia remains comparatively limited (Dhaigude & Mohan, 2023; Cui et al., 2024). **Second**, previous studies frequently examine consumer behaviour within a single platform or a narrowly defined social-commerce environment, whereas contemporary customer journeys increasingly involve multiple digital touchpoints (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Singh & Pandey, 2024). **Third**, existing research draws on a wide range of theoretical perspectives—including SOR, technology-acceptance theories and information-processing frameworks—but remains theoretically fragmented, with limited integration across technological, informational, psychological and behavioural mechanisms (Busalim & Asadi, 2025). **Fourth**, although numerous direct and mediated relationships have been identified, comparatively limited evidence explains an integrated process in which multidimensional platform-related stimuli influence parallel psychological evaluations that subsequently become behaviourally consequential through eWOM adoption (Verma et al., 2023). **Fifth**, whether gender conditions the conversion of adopted eWOM into purchase intention remains relationship- and context-specific and requires direct empirical examination (Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015).

Research Questions and Objectives

Guided by the SOR framework, the study addresses sixteen research questions (RQ1–RQ16), each paired with a corresponding research objective (RO1–RO16). RQ1 and RQ2 examine whether Information Quality significantly influences Trust and Perceived Value respectively; RQ3 and RQ4 examine whether Service Quality significantly influences Trust and Perceived Value; RQ5 and RQ6 examine whether Convenience significantly influences Trust and Perceived Value; RQ7 and RQ8 examine whether Information Quantity significantly influences Trust and Perceived Value; and RQ9 and RQ10 examine whether Perceived Ease of Use significantly influences Trust and Perceived Value. RQ11 and RQ12 examine whether Trust and Perceived Value respectively influence eWOM Adoption; RQ13 examines whether eWOM Adoption influences Purchase Intention; RQ14 and RQ15 examine whether eWOM Adoption mediates the effects of Trust and Perceived Value on Purchase Intention; and RQ16 examines whether Gender moderates the eWOM Adoption–Purchase Intention relationship. The corresponding objectives (RO1–RO16) are to determine, in each case, whether the hypothesised effect is statistically significant and consistent with the hypothesised direction. Because the study is quantitative and hypothesis-driven, the research objectives are framed as tests of significant effect rather than as explanatory "how" or "why" questions.

Significance of the Study

The study contributes to theory by extending the SOR framework to a multidimensional content-commerce environment, by positioning Trust and Perceived Value as parallel psychological evaluations, and by positioning eWOM Adoption as an information-conversion mechanism linking psychological evaluations to purchase intention. Practically, the findings inform platform operators, skincare brands, online sellers, content creators and policymakers about which platform dimensions deserve priority in converting consumer engagement into purchase intention. The study is also indirectly relevant to the responsible development of Malaysia's digital economy, insofar as accurate information, transparent eWOM and reliable platform services may support better-informed consumer decision-making and responsible

consumption (OECD, 2016).

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is bounded in four respects. First, the research population is limited to Malaysian Generation Y consumers—individuals born between 1981 and 1996—who reside in Malaysia and have recent experience of mainstream content-commerce platforms. Second, the product category is limited to skincare products, which possess the experience and credence attributes that make platform information and eWOM particularly consequential.

Third, the research context is limited to mainstream content-commerce platforms operating in Malaysia, examined from a pooled rather than a platform-specific perspective. Fourth, the study is limited to the constructs specified in the research framework and does not examine price, perceived risk, brand familiarity or other variables beyond the model. These boundaries reflect deliberate choices intended to balance theoretical focus with empirical tractability.

Organisation of the Article

The remainder of this article is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature and develops the sixteen hypotheses. Section 3 describes the research methodology. Section 4 presents the data analysis and findings. Section 5 discusses the findings. Section 6 addresses the theoretical and practical implications, limitations and future research. Section 7 concludes.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

This section reviews the theoretical and empirical literature that underpins the research framework and develops the sixteen hypotheses. The review proceeds in four stages. First, it establishes the theoretical foundations of the study. Second, it examines the five platform-related stimuli and their hypothesised effects on Trust and Perceived Value. Third, it positions Trust and Perceived Value as parallel psychological evaluations and reviews the roles of eWOM Adoption and Purchase Intention. Fourth, it develops the mediation and moderation hypotheses and presents the proposed framework. Throughout, the review is organised around Malaysian Generation Y skincare consumers, a population characterised by high digital connectivity, active participation in content-commerce platforms, and culturally and religiously informed product expectations (Isa et al., 2023; Kanwal et al., 2022). This population is theoretically significant because Generation Y consumers are frequent users of social and content-driven commerce, yet they face substantial information and authenticity challenges when evaluating experience- and credence-based skincare products (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010; Filieri, 2015).

Theoretical Foundation

The present study is grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, supported by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Information Systems (IS) Success Model, service-convenience theory and the Information Adoption Model (IAM). These perspectives are assigned complementary rather than competing roles within a single explanatory structure.

The SOR framework, originating in environmental psychology (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), proposes that external environmental stimuli influence an individual's internal state (the organism), which subsequently shapes behavioural responses. Applied to online retailing,

environmental cues constitute the stimulus, consumers' internal evaluations constitute the organism, and purchase intention constitutes the response (Eroglu et al., 2001; Kim & Lennon, 2013). The framework is well suited to content-commerce because consumers encounter multiple informational, service-related and technological cues simultaneously, and their responses depend on how these cues are interpreted rather than on exposure alone (Jacoby, 2002; Kanwal et al., 2022). However, traditional applications of SOR commonly examine a limited number of environmental cues or isolated platform characteristics (Eroglu et al., 2001). The present study conceptualises five distinct but interrelated platform stimuli, thereby reflecting the complexity of contemporary content-commerce environments in which consumers simultaneously evaluate informational, technological, service-related and transactional conditions.

The TAM (Davis, 1989) supports the role of Perceived Ease of Use, defined as the extent to which an individual believes that using a technological system requires little effort. Perceived ease of use is a foundational construct of technology-acceptance research and has been shown to influence users' evaluations and acceptance of information systems (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000; King & He, 2006). The updated IS Success Model (DeLone & McLean, 2003) supports Information Quality and Service Quality as major dimensions of information-system success that extend explicitly to electronic-commerce environments. Service-convenience theory (Berry et al., 2002; Seiders et al., 2007) supports Convenience as the time and effort required to obtain and use a service, while the online-review literature supports Information Quantity as an informational cue affecting consumer evaluation and purchase decision-making (Park et al., 2007; Filieri, 2015).

The IAM (Sussman & Siegal, 2003) explains why exposure to online recommendations does not automatically produce behavioural action: individuals must first assess the usefulness and credibility of information and incorporate it into their decision-making. Subsequent research extended the IAM to online consumer communities and electronic word-of-mouth, demonstrating that information adoption is a distinct cognitive stage between encountering information and using it to form purchase intention (Cheung et al., 2008; Erkan & Evans, 2016). Meta-analytic evidence further confirms that eWOM effectiveness operates through intermediate cognitive mechanisms such as credibility, usefulness and information adoption rather than through exposure alone (Verma et al., 2023; Ismagilova et al., 2020). The IAM therefore provides the mechanism-level foundation for eWOM Adoption in the present study. Together, the five theoretical perspectives provide a complementary logic: SOR supplies the overall stimulus–organism–response architecture; TAM, the IS Success Model and service-convenience theory supply the content of the stimulus side; and the IAM supplies the mechanism through which internal evaluations are translated into behavioural intention.

The assignment of complementary rather than competing roles reflects a deliberate theoretical choice. SOR supplies the organising architecture but does not itself specify which stimuli or which organism states matter in any given context; the present study supplies this content from technology-acceptance, information-systems and service-convenience research. The IAM supplies the process through which internal evaluations become behaviourally consequential, thereby addressing a limitation of conventional SOR applications that treat the response as an immediate outcome of the organism states. This integration is consistent with recent calls for theoretical synthesis in social-commerce and livestream-commerce research,

which emphasise that single-theory models frequently provide incomplete explanations of the multiple mechanisms operating simultaneously within contemporary digital environments (Busalim & Asadi, 2025; Singh & Pandey, 2024). By combining these perspectives, the study specifies the stimulus content, the organism states and the information-adoption mechanism within a single coherent framework rather than treating them in isolation.

Platform-Related Stimuli and Psychological Evaluations

Five platform-related characteristics are conceptualised as multidimensional stimuli of the content-commerce environment: Information Quality, Service Quality, Convenience, Information Quantity and Perceived Ease of Use. These stimuli are theorised to shape two parallel psychological evaluations—Trust and Perceived Value—that represent the organism component of the SOR framework.

Information Quality refers to consumers' perception that information provided on the platform is accurate, complete, relevant and useful for decision-making (DeLone & McLean, 2003; Blanco-Encomienda & Rosillo-Díaz, 2025). Information quality is distinct from information quantity: greater information volume does not necessarily imply better information quality, because online content may be repetitive, inconsistent, commercially sponsored, incomplete or exaggerated (Filieri, 2015). High-quality information reduces uncertainty and enables meaningful product assessment. When platform information is accurate and substantiated, consumers are more likely to believe that the platform is honest and reliable, and to perceive that engagement provides worthwhile benefits. Prior research demonstrates that information quality is a robust antecedent of online trust and perceived value (Kim & Niehm, 2009; Pearson et al., 2012). In social-commerce and livestream settings, information quality has likewise been shown to enhance consumer trust and, through it, purchase intention (Hajli, 2015; Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020). Conversely, low-quality or misleading content erodes trust and can suppress conversion even when platform traffic is high (Beck et al., 2024). Accordingly:

H1: Information Quality has a positive effect on Trust.

H2: Information Quality has a positive effect on Perceived Value.

Service Quality reflects consumers' evaluation of the quality of services provided by the platform and its sellers, including responsiveness, information provision and problem resolution (Parasuraman et al., 2005; Herzallah & Al-Sharafi, 2025). In skincare content-commerce, service quality is particularly salient because consumers may be concerned about product authenticity, packaging condition, delivery, return procedures and responses to complaints (Blut, 2016). Reliable and responsive service signals that the platform and its sellers can be depended upon, which fosters trust, and reduces the effort and risk associated with the transaction, which enhances perceived value (Qalati et al., 2021; Shaikh et al., 2023). Empirical studies in e-commerce consistently identify e-service quality as a significant antecedent of trust, satisfaction and value, particularly in product categories where authenticity and fulfilment risk are salient (Blut, 2016; Parasuraman et al., 2005). Thus:

H3: Service Quality has a positive effect on Trust.

H4: Service Quality has a positive effect on Perceived Value.

Convenience concerns consumers' perception that shopping through the platform saves time and effort (Berry et al., 2002; Jiang et al., 2013). Service convenience encompasses the time

and effort associated with searching for information, comparing alternatives, completing payments and managing transactions (Seiders et al., 2007). Convenient processes reduce the temporal and cognitive sacrifices of online shopping, which increases the perceived benefits of participation and signals that the platform is designed to serve consumers' needs (Duarte et al., 2018; Zeqiri et al., 2023). Prior research demonstrates that convenience is a consistent predictor of satisfaction, perceived value and repurchase intention across online retailing contexts (Seiders et al., 2007; Jiang et al., 2013). Therefore:

H5: Convenience has a positive effect on Trust.

H6: Convenience has a positive effect on Perceived Value.

Information Quantity refers to consumers' perception that sufficient information is available for making purchase decisions (Blanco-Encomienda & Rosillo-Díaz, 2025). A greater volume of reviews, ratings and comments provides social proof and reduces perceived uncertainty, thereby strengthening trust and the sense that the platform offers comprehensive decision support (Park et al., 2007; Hung et al., 2023). Empirical evidence indicates that review quantity and review quality jointly shape consumer evaluation, although their effects are conceptually and statistically distinct (Filieri, 2015; Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). Information quantity and information quality are conceptually related but distinct, and both are expected to contribute independently to consumers' evaluations. Hence:

H7: Information Quantity has a positive effect on Trust.

H8: Information Quantity has a positive effect on Perceived Value.

Perceived Ease of Use refers to consumers' perception that the platform is easy to learn and operate (Davis, 1989). An intuitive and efficient interface reduces the effort required to search, compare and transact, which increases perceived benefits and, consistent with TAM, fosters favourable evaluations of the system (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000; King & He, 2006). Meta-analytic evidence confirms that perceived ease of use is a stable predictor of technology acceptance, although its relative influence may diminish among technologically experienced users (King & He, 2006). Ease of use may also signal platform competence and reliability, thereby contributing to trust. Thus:

H9: Perceived Ease of Use has a positive effect on Trust.

H10: Perceived Ease of Use has a positive effect on Perceived Value.

Trust and Perceived Value as Parallel Organism Evaluations

Trust and Perceived Value are conceptualised as two distinct but parallel psychological evaluations rather than as a predetermined causal sequence. Trust reflects consumers' confidence in the reliability, integrity and credibility of the platform, its sellers and the information provided (Mayer et al., 1995; Gefen et al., 2003). Perceived Value reflects consumers' overall assessment of the benefits received relative to the monetary, temporal, cognitive and psychological sacrifices associated with platform use and product purchase (Zeithaml, 1988; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). A consumer may trust a platform without perceiving sufficient value in a proposed transaction, or perceive value while remaining uncertain about platform reliability; examining both constructs simultaneously therefore provides a more differentiated account of consumers' internal evaluations (Kim & Park, 2013). Previous studies frequently examine Trust or Perceived Value separately, which may provide only a partial explanation of consumer decision-making (Verma et al., 2023).

Consumers who trust the platform and its sellers are more likely to regard the reviews, recommendations and user-generated content encountered on the platform as credible and worth accepting. Similarly, consumers who perceive value in the platform experience are more motivated to draw on available information to support their decisions. Both evaluations are therefore expected to promote the adoption of eWOM:

H11: Trust has a positive effect on eWOM Adoption.

H12: Perceived Value has a positive effect on eWOM Adoption.

eWOM Adoption and Purchase Intention

eWOM Adoption refers to consumers' acceptance and use of online reviews, comments and recommendations in their decision-making (Sussman & Siegal, 2003; Cheung et al., 2008). Consistent with the IAM, exposure to eWOM does not automatically produce behaviour; information becomes influential only when consumers judge it useful and incorporate it into product evaluation (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Verma et al., 2023). A consumer may watch a creator's recommendation but reject it because it appears overly commercial, whereas another may accept the same recommendation because it is detailed, consistent with other reviews and aligned with personal needs. When consumers adopt eWOM, the information becomes a concrete input into their purchase decisions, strengthening their intention to purchase. Meta-analytic evidence confirms that eWOM adoption is a robust determinant of purchase intention (Ismagilova et al., 2020; Verma et al., 2023). Accordingly:

H13: eWOM Adoption has a positive effect on Purchase Intention.

The Mediating Role of eWOM Adoption

Extending the direct relationships, the study theorises that eWOM Adoption functions as an information-conversion mechanism through which Trust and Perceived Value become behaviourally consequential. Favourable psychological evaluations of the platform do not by themselves guarantee purchase intention; rather, they increase the likelihood that consumers accept and use the information encountered, which in turn drives purchase intention (Sussman & Siegal, 2003; Erkan & Evans, 2016). This specification is consistent with the IAM, which holds that information becomes behaviourally influential only after it is adopted. The study therefore specifies two mediation hypotheses:

H14: eWOM Adoption mediates the relationship between Trust and Purchase Intention.

H15: eWOM Adoption mediates the relationship between Perceived Value and Purchase Intention.

The Moderating Role of Gender

Finally, the study examines Gender as a potential boundary condition of the eWOM Adoption–Purchase Intention relationship. Gender differences have been documented in information processing, product involvement, perceived risk and the translation of accepted information into behavioural intention (Meyers-Levy, 1989; Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015). However, such differences are contingent on task, context and product characteristics rather than universally consistent (Kanwal et al., 2022; Putrevu, 2001). Because both male and female consumers are increasingly exposed to skincare-related content-commerce, whether adopted eWOM produces equivalent purchase intention across genders is an empirical question. Thus:

H16: Gender moderates the relationship between eWOM Adoption and Purchase Intention.

Proposed Research Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework. Information Quality, Service Quality, Convenience, Information Quantity and Perceived Ease of Use constitute five platform-related stimuli (S); Trust and Perceived Value constitute two parallel psychological evaluations (O); eWOM Adoption constitutes the information-adoption mechanism; and Purchase Intention constitutes the behavioural response (R). Gender is specified as a moderator of the eWOM Adoption–Purchase Intention path. The model comprises thirteen direct hypotheses, two mediation hypotheses and one moderation hypothesis.

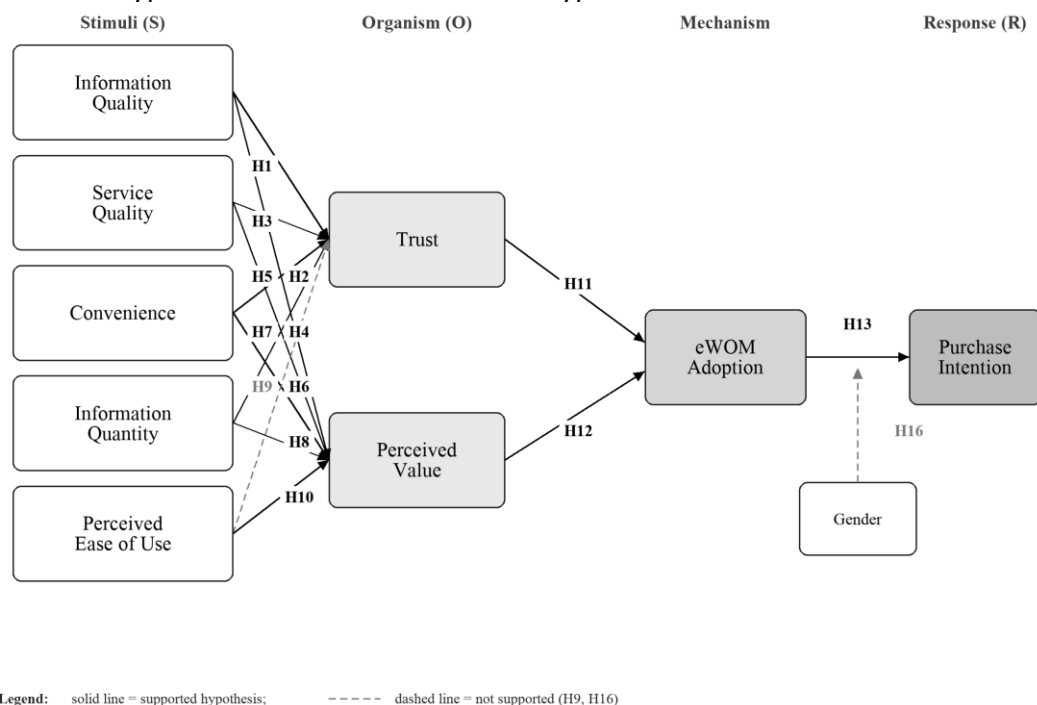


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional research design within a positivist philosophical orientation and a deductive approach to theory development (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Saunders et al., 2023). The positivist orientation assumes that consumer behaviour can be examined through observable, measurable variables and that the hypothesised relationships between constructs can be subjected to statistical testing. The deductive approach proceeds from the theoretical framework developed in Section 2 to specific, falsifiable hypotheses that are tested against empirical data. Following the research-onion logic, the design moved from the outer layer of research philosophy toward the inner layers of data collection and analysis, thereby providing a systematic and transparent account of the methodological choices. A mono-method quantitative strategy, operationalised through a survey, was adopted to permit statistical examination of the thirteen direct effects, two specific indirect effects and one moderating effect specified in the framework. PLS-SEM was considered appropriate because the proposed framework contains multiple reflective latent constructs, thirteen hypothesised direct relationships, two specific indirect effects and an interaction-based moderating effect, while statistical inference can be conducted through non-parametric bootstrapping without requiring multivariate normality (Hair et al., 2022). The

unit of analysis was the individual Malaysian Generation Y consumer.

Population, Sampling and Sample Size

The target population comprised Malaysian Generation Y consumers with recent experience of mainstream content-commerce platforms and recent exposure to skincare-related content. Generation Y was operationally defined as individuals born between 1981 and 1996; during the 2025–2026 data-collection period, eligible respondents were approximately 29 to 45 years old (Dimock, 2019). Eligible respondents were required to reside in Malaysia, have used at least one mainstream content-commerce platform during the preceding six months, and have viewed, searched for or otherwise interacted with skincare-related content on such a platform during the same period. Both male and female consumers were included because Gender was examined as a binary moderator.

Because a complete sampling frame of Malaysian Generation Y consumers satisfying these criteria was unavailable, a non-probability purposive sampling procedure was employed, with respondents recruited through purposively selected online channels and digital communities. Sample adequacy was assessed using complementary criteria. Applying the traditional ten-times rule to the largest number of structural paths directed at a single endogenous construct (five) yielded a heuristic benchmark of 50 observations. An a priori power analysis using G*Power 3.1, with a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$), a significance level of .05, a statistical power of .95 and five predictors, indicated a minimum required sample of 138 respondents (Faul et al., 2009; Cohen, 1992). A total of 452 responses were collected; after screening, 66 responses were excluded, yielding a final valid sample of 386 respondents (85.4% usable response rate), which substantially exceeded the minimum sample-size requirements.

Because purposive online sampling does not provide a defined sampling frame, the study combined the a priori power benchmark with procedural measures designed to protect data quality. The final sample of 386 respondents exceeded the minimum required sample by a substantial margin and comfortably satisfied the observation-to-parameter requirements of the model. Data-quality safeguards included eligibility screening, completeness checks, assessment of response patterns and exclusion of implausibly short completion times, which jointly reduced the risk that careless or ineligible responses would distort the parameter estimates (Meade & Craig, 2012). These procedures are consistent with the recommendation that non-probability samples in PLS-SEM research should be evaluated on statistical power, data quality and sample-to-model compatibility rather than on probabilistic representativeness alone (Hair et al., 2022).

Measurement Instrument

The measurement instrument comprised nine reflective multi-item constructs: Information Quality (6 items), Service Quality (3 items), Convenience (4 items), Information Quantity (3 items), Perceived Ease of Use (3 items), Trust (5 items), Perceived Value (3 items), eWOM Adoption (3 items) and Purchase Intention (4 items). All items were adapted from previously validated scales and measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Information Quality and Information Quantity were adapted from Blanco-Encomienda and Rosillo-Díaz (2025); Service Quality from Herzallah and Al-Sharafi (2025); Convenience from Jiang, Yang and Jun (2013); Perceived Ease of Use from Davis (1989); Trust from Do et al. (2025); Perceived Value and eWOM Adoption from Abbas et al.

(2025); and Purchase Intention from Blanco-Encomienda and Rosillo-Díaz (2025).

The adaptation process was deliberately limited to contextual and linguistic modifications, preserving the underlying theoretical meaning of each item while aligning terminology with content-commerce platforms, skincare-related information and purchasing activities. For example, Information Quality items addressed the accuracy, completeness and usefulness of platform skincare information; Convenience items addressed the time and effort required to search, compare and complete transactions; and eWOM Adoption items addressed the extent to which consumers accept and use online reviews and recommendations in their decisions. The instrument was refined through expert review (including cognitive interviews with five to eight respondents), pre-testing and a pilot study before final administration, and a consistent response format was adopted across constructs to facilitate respondent comprehension and comparability (Dillman et al., 2014). Gender was treated as an observed binary demographic variable rather than as a reflective multi-item construct, and was incorporated into the analysis as a moderating interaction term with eWOM Adoption.

Data Collection and Research Ethics

The questionnaire was distributed through online channels, and response screening procedures were applied to verify respondent eligibility, response completeness, coding accuracy, unusually short completion times and response-pattern irregularities (Meade & Craig, 2012). Ethical safeguards were observed throughout: participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and responses were collected anonymously and stored confidentially. Because the data were collected from the same respondents at a single point in time, common method bias was a recognised risk; procedural remedies—including the assurance of anonymity, clear instructions, separation of construct sections and careful item wording—were incorporated into the questionnaire design in line with established recommendations (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In addition to these procedural remedies, the analytical stage incorporated diagnostic attention to common method variance. The measurement and structural results were interpreted with awareness that same-source, same-time data can inflate observed relationships, and the reporting of confidence intervals and effect sizes was intended to convey the practical magnitude of effects rather than statistical significance alone.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 28 for preliminary screening and descriptive statistics, and SmartPLS 4 for PLS-SEM (Ringle et al., 2024). The analytical procedure comprised five stages: (1) preliminary data screening; (2) assessment of the reflective measurement model using outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, composite reliability (rho_C), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT); (3) assessment of the structural model using inner VIF values, standardised path coefficients, bootstrap significance, coefficients of determination (R^2) and effect sizes (f^2); (4) assessment of the two specific indirect effects through eWOM Adoption using non-parametric bootstrapping; and (5) assessment of the moderating effect of Gender through the Gender $\times$ eWOM Adoption interaction term using the two-stage moderation procedure. The moderation model was estimated using SmartPLS 4's two-stage approach, in which the Gender $\times$ eWOM Adoption interaction term is incorporated together with the main effects of the moderator, with Gender dummy-coded so that one category serves as the reference condition (Ringle et al., 2024). Statistical inference relied on non-parametric percentile

bootstrapping with a large number of subsamples, providing bootstrap standard errors, t-values, p-values and 95% confidence intervals for the structural coefficients and for the two specific indirect effects (Hair et al., 2022).

Data Analysis and Findings

Data Screening and Respondent Profile

A total of 452 responses were initially collected. Following data screening, 66 responses were excluded and 386 responses were retained for analysis, producing a usable response rate of 85.4%. Table 1 summarises the demographic and content-commerce profile of the final sample. The gender distribution was relatively balanced: 202 respondents (52.3%) were female and 184 (47.7%) were male, ensuring that both gender groups were substantially represented for the moderation analysis. With respect to age, respondents aged 35–39 years constituted the largest group ($n = 166$; 43.0%), followed by those aged 40–45 years ($n = 114$; 29.5%) and 29–34 years ($n = 106$; 27.5%), consistent with the predefined Generation Y scope. Private-sector employees constituted the largest employment category (26.8%), followed by public-sector or government-linked employees (21.6%) and self-employed, freelance or business-owner respondents (19.0%). The sample was geographically distributed across multiple Malaysian states and federal territories.

The behavioural profile confirmed that respondents possessed relevant recent experience for evaluating the constructs. Regarding skincare-content exposure during the preceding six months, 31.3% reported exposure approximately once a week, 30.3% one to three times a month, 25.6% several times a week, and 4.7% daily or almost daily; taken together, 61.7% reported exposure at least approximately once a week. Regarding content-commerce platform usage, 85.4% of respondents with valid platform-usage data reported using such platforms for at least 30 minutes per day. Regarding purchase frequency, 72.5% of respondents with valid purchase-frequency information reported purchasing skincare products approximately once a month or more during the preceding six months. One respondent contained unrecoverable entries for several socio-demographic and behavioural-profile variables; these values were treated as missing, so valid percentages for those variables were calculated using $n = 385$ while the PLS-SEM analytical sample remained $N = 386$. These characteristics indicate that respondents were regular participants in the digital environment examined in the study.

Table 1

Demographic and Content-Commerce Profile of Respondents (N = 386)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Valid percentage (%)
Gender	Female	202	52.3
	Male	184	47.7
Age	29–34 years	106	27.5
	35–39 years	166	43.0
	40–45 years	114	29.5
Marital status	Single	52	13.5
	Married	259	67.3
	Divorced / separated	10	2.6
	Widowed	5	1.3
	Prefer not to disclose	59	15.3

Highest education	Secondary school or below	75	19.5
	Diploma / associate degree	114	29.6
	Bachelor's degree	125	32.5
	Master's degree	36	9.4
	Doctoral degree	23	6.0
	Other	12	3.1
Employment status	Private sector	103	26.8
	Public sector / government-linked	83	21.6
	Self-employed / freelance / business owner	73	19.0
	Homemaker	52	13.5
	Student	20	5.2
	Retired	12	3.1
	Unemployed	22	5.7
	Other	20	5.2
Monthly income (RM)	RM3,000–RM6,000	152	39.5
	RM6,001–RM9,000	107	27.8
	RM9,001–RM15,000	53	13.8
	Above RM15,000	18	4.7
	Prefer not to disclose	55	14.3
Skincare-content exposure (6 months)	Less than once a month	31	8.0
	1–3 times a month	117	30.3
	About once a week	121	31.3
	Several times a week	99	25.6
	Daily or almost daily	18	4.7
Platform usage (per day)	Less than 30 minutes	56	14.5
	30 minutes to <1 hour	151	39.2
	1–2 hours	133	34.5
	More than 2 hours	45	11.7
Purchase frequency (6 months)	Less than once a month	106	27.5
	About once a month	107	27.8
	2–3 times a month	83	21.6
	About once a week or more	89	23.1
State / federal territory	Johor	35	9.1
	Kedah	32	8.3

	Kelantan	13	3.4
	Melaka	12	3.1
	Negeri Sembilan	40	10.4
	Pahang	24	6.2
	Penang	13	3.4
	Perak	30	7.8
	Perlis	32	8.3
	Sabah	8	2.1
	Sarawak	12	3.1
	Selangor	26	6.8
	Terengganu	36	9.4
	Kuala Lumpur	37	9.6
	Labuan	18	4.7
	Putrajaya	17	4.4

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were examined to provide an overall assessment of respondents' evaluations of the nine constructs. Table 2 reports the sample size, minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation for each construct. Construct means ranged from 5.395 (Information Quality) to 5.563 (Perceived Ease of Use) on the seven-point scale, indicating generally favourable evaluations across the nine constructs. Standard deviations ranged from 1.468 (Convenience) to 1.601 (Trust), suggesting reasonable dispersion in the responses. The distributions were moderately negatively skewed, consistent with the predominantly favourable evaluations, but remained within acceptable limits for variance-based structural equation modelling (Hair et al., 2022). The uniformly high means are consistent with a sample of frequent content-commerce users who generally hold positive views of the platforms they use, while the non-trivial standard deviations indicate meaningful between-respondent variation that the structural model is able to exploit.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Research Constructs (N = 386)

Construct	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Information Quality	1.667	7.000	5.395	1.514	-1.285	-0.106
Service Quality	1.333	7.000	5.547	1.477	-1.551	1.102
Convenience	1.500	7.000	5.556	1.468	-1.512	0.742
Information Quantity	1.000	7.000	5.522	1.520	-1.534	0.954
Perceived Ease of Use	1.333	7.000	5.563	1.500	-1.543	0.944
Trust	1.200	6.800	5.429	1.601	-1.386	0.220
Perceived Value	1.000	7.000	5.501	1.490	-1.446	0.684
eWOM Adoption	1.333	7.000	5.451	1.560	-1.307	0.277

Purchase Intention	1.000	7.000	5.484	1.499	-1.528	0.845
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Measurement Model Assessment

Indicator reliability was assessed using standardised outer loadings. All loadings ranged from .878 to .931, substantially exceeding the recommended threshold of .708, so no items were removed. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, rho_A and composite reliability (rho_C). Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .896 to .950, rho_A from .902 to .952, and rho_C from .935 to .962, all exceeding the threshold of .70. Convergent validity was assessed using the AVE, with values ranging from .793 to .846, well above the threshold of .50. Table 3 reports the reliability and convergent-validity statistics for each construct.

Table 3

Indicator Reliability, Internal Consistency and Convergent Validity

Construct	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's α	rho_A	rho_C	AVE
Information Quality	6	.881–.901	.948	.952	.958	.793
Service Quality	3	.905–.925	.904	.905	.940	.839
Convenience	4	.884–.919	.922	.931	.944	.809
Information Quantity	3	.897–.922	.896	.902	.935	.827
Perceived Ease of Use	3	.899–.931	.909	.924	.943	.846
Trust	5	.901–.924	.950	.952	.962	.834
Perceived Value	3	.903–.919	.896	.903	.935	.828
eWOM Adoption	3	.902–.924	.904	.907	.940	.839
Purchase Intention	4	.878–.924	.929	.939	.949	.823

Discriminant validity was assessed using the HTMT criterion. All HTMT values ranged from .263 to .539, substantially below the conservative threshold of .85, indicating that the nine constructs were empirically distinct (Henseler et al., 2015). This is particularly important because several theoretically related construct pairs were deliberately conceptualised as distinct—Information Quality from Information Quantity, Convenience from Perceived Ease of Use, Trust from Perceived Value, and eWOM Adoption from Purchase Intention. The Fornell–Larcker criterion, examined as supplementary evidence, was also satisfied. These results confirm that the reflective measurement model demonstrated adequate reliability and validity.

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Structural collinearity was evaluated using inner VIF values, which ranged from 1.132 to 2.374 and were therefore below the threshold of 3.00, indicating no problematic collinearity. Statistical inference was based on non-parametric bootstrapping with a pre-specified two-

tailed significance criterion of $p < .05$. Table 4 reports the structural-model results.

Table 4

Structural Model Assessment and Direct Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	Information Quality → Trust	.199	3.807	<.001	Supported
H2	Information Quality → Perceived Value	.128	2.630	.009	Supported
H3	Service Quality → Trust	.119	2.466	.014	Supported
H4	Service Quality → Perceived Value	.145	2.654	.008	Supported
H5	Convenience → Trust	.149	2.928	.003	Supported
H6	Convenience → Perceived Value	.162	2.887	.004	Supported
H7	Information Quantity → Trust	.174	3.849	<.001	Supported
H8	Information Quantity → Perceived Value	.103	1.979	.048	Supported
H9	Perceived Ease of Use → Trust	.105	1.960	.050	Not supported
H10	Perceived Ease of Use → Perceived Value	.147	2.270	.023	Supported
H11	Trust → eWOM Adoption	.216	4.012	<.001	Supported
H12	Perceived Value → eWOM Adoption	.264	4.804	<.001	Supported
H13	eWOM Adoption →	.323	3.581	<.001	Supported

	Purchase Intention				
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Of the thirteen direct hypotheses, twelve were supported. Information Quality significantly and positively influenced Trust ($\beta = .199$, $t = 3.807$, $p < .001$) and Perceived Value ($\beta = .128$, $t = 2.630$, $p = .009$), supporting H1 and H2. Service Quality significantly influenced Trust ($\beta = .119$, $t = 2.466$, $p = .014$) and Perceived Value ($\beta = .145$, $t = 2.654$, $p = .008$), supporting H3 and H4. Convenience positively influenced Trust ($\beta = .149$, $t = 2.928$, $p = .003$) and Perceived Value ($\beta = .162$, $t = 2.887$, $p = .004$), supporting H5 and H6. Information Quantity significantly influenced Trust ($\beta = .174$, $t = 3.849$, $p < .001$) and Perceived Value ($\beta = .103$, $t = 1.979$, $p = .048$), supporting H7 and H8. Perceived Ease of Use significantly influenced Perceived Value ($\beta = .147$, $t = 2.270$, $p = .023$), supporting H10; however, its relationship with Trust was positive but non-significant ($\beta = .105$, $t = 1.960$, $p = .050$), so H9 was not supported. This result should be interpreted as marginal rather than as evidence that the relationship is clearly absent. Trust significantly influenced eWOM Adoption ($\beta = .216$, $t = 4.012$, $p < .001$), supporting H11, while Perceived Value showed an even stronger relationship with eWOM Adoption ($\beta = .264$, $t = 4.804$, $p < .001$), supporting H12. Finally, eWOM Adoption significantly influenced Purchase Intention ($\beta = .323$, $t = 3.581$, $p < .001$), supporting H13.

Variance explained followed a descending pattern across the model: the five antecedents accounted for 27.2% in Trust ($R^2 = .272$) and 23.2% in Perceived Value ($R^2 = .232$); the two evaluations jointly accounted for 15.6% in eWOM Adoption ($R^2 = .156$); and the full equation accounted for 16.2% in Purchase Intention ($R^2 = .162$). Effect sizes were mostly small by Cohen's benchmarks—the largest were Perceived Value $\rightarrow$ eWOM Adoption ($f^2 = .073$), eWOM Adoption $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention ($f^2 = .053$), Trust $\rightarrow$ eWOM Adoption ($f^2 = .049$) and Information Quality $\rightarrow$ Trust ($f^2 = .042$). Notably, several statistically significant paths returned f^2 values below .02, a reminder that significance and substantive importance are different criteria.

Mediation Analysis

Table 5 reports the mediation results. eWOM Adoption significantly mediated the relationship between Trust and Purchase Intention (specific indirect effect $\beta = .070$, $t = 2.576$, $p = .010$, 95% CI [.023, .129]), supporting H14. eWOM Adoption also significantly mediated the relationship between Perceived Value and Purchase Intention (specific indirect effect $\beta = .085$, $t = 2.768$, $p = .006$, 95% CI [.031, .151]), supporting H15. Because the auxiliary direct effects (Trust $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention, $\beta = .177$, $p < .001$; Perceived Value $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention, $\beta = .122$, $p = .022$) were also significant and operated in the same positive direction, the observed pattern corresponds to complementary partial mediation (Zhao et al., 2010).

Table 5

Mediating Effects of eWOM Adoption

Hypothesis	Mediation path	β (indirect)	t-value	p-value	95% CI	Decision
H14	Trust → eWOM Adoption → Purchase Intention	.070	2.576	.010	[.023, .129]	Supported
H15	Perceived Value → eWOM Adoption → Purchase Intention	.085	2.768	.006	[.031, .151]	Supported

Moderation Analysis

Gender was specified as a binary moderator of the eWOM Adoption–Purchase Intention relationship. The interaction term Gender $\times$ eWOM Adoption $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention produced $\beta = -.209$ ($t = 1.869$, $p = .062$, 95% CI $[-.421, .012]$), with a very small effect size ($f^2 = .013$). Because the p-value exceeded .05 and the confidence interval included zero, the moderating effect was not statistically significant, and H16 was not supported. The Gender main effect on Purchase Intention was also non-significant ($\beta = .043$, $t = .456$, $p = .648$), although the relevant test for H16 is the interaction coefficient rather than the main effect.

In summary, 14 of the 16 hypotheses were supported: all five stimuli significantly predicted Perceived Value, four of five significantly predicted Trust, and both mediation hypotheses were supported, whereas H9 (Perceived Ease of Use $\rightarrow$ Trust) and H16 (Gender moderation) were not supported.

Table 6

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Decision
H1	Information Quality $\rightarrow$ Trust	Supported
H2	Information Quality $\rightarrow$ Perceived Value	Supported
H3	Service Quality $\rightarrow$ Trust	Supported
H4	Service Quality $\rightarrow$ Perceived Value	Supported
H5	Convenience $\rightarrow$ Trust	Supported
H6	Convenience $\rightarrow$ Perceived Value	Supported
H7	Information Quantity $\rightarrow$ Trust	Supported
H8	Information Quantity $\rightarrow$ Perceived Value	Supported

H9	Perceived Ease of Use → Trust	Not supported
H10	Perceived Ease of Use → Perceived Value	Supported
H11	Trust → eWOM Adoption	Supported
H12	Perceived Value → eWOM Adoption	Supported
H13	eWOM Adoption → Purchase Intention	Supported
H14	Trust → eWOM Adoption → Purchase Intention (mediation)	Supported
H15	Perceived Value → eWOM Adoption → Purchase Intention (mediation)	Supported
H16	Gender moderates eWOM Adoption → Purchase Intention	Not supported

Discussion of Findings

Overview of the Empirical Findings

Rather than confirming a simple stimulus–response model, the results paint a staged picture of content-commerce consumer behaviour. Platform characteristics first shape internal psychological evaluations; those evaluations then govern whether the eWOM encountered is judged credible and worthwhile enough to be absorbed into product evaluation; and the adopted information finally feeds into purchase intention. Fourteen of the sixteen hypotheses received support, whereas H9 (Perceived Ease of Use → Trust) and H16 (Gender moderation) did not. Each hypothesis is discussed in turn below, with attention to its underlying logic, the empirical result, and its position relative to prior literature.

Discussion of the Direct Effects of the Five Platform Stimuli

H1: Information Quality → Trust. Information Quality significantly and positively influenced Trust ($\beta = .199$, $t = 3.807$, $p < .001$), supporting H1. The result is consistent with the IS Success Model, which positions information quality as a primary driver of favourable system evaluations (DeLone & McLean, 2003). Prior research has similarly found that accurate, complete and relevant information strengthens consumers' confidence in the platform and its sellers (Kim & Niehm, 2009; Pearson et al., 2012). In the skincare context, where ingredient claims, authenticity and safety information are central to the purchase decision, high-quality information appears to function as a direct signal of platform credibility. Notably, Information Quality produced the largest coefficient among the antecedents of Trust, underscoring that, for Malaysian Generation Y consumers, trust is built primarily on the reliability of the information environment rather than on interface or convenience attributes.

H2: Information Quality → Perceived Value. Information Quality also significantly influenced Perceived Value ($\beta = .128$, $t = 2.630$, $p = .009$), supporting H2. This is consistent with the view that useful, decision-relevant information reduces the cognitive effort and uncertainty associated with product evaluation, thereby enhancing the perceived worth of engaging with

the platform (Pearson et al., 2012; Kim & Niehm, 2009). The smaller coefficient relative to H1 indicates that information quality contributes more strongly to building trust than to value assessment, which is theoretically sensible: accurate information first reassures consumers about the reliability of the environment before it translates into a favourable benefit–sacrifice evaluation.

H3: Service Quality → Trust. Service Quality significantly influenced Trust ($\beta = .119$, $t = 2.466$, $p = .014$), supporting H3. Reliable and responsive service—covering delivery, returns, complaint handling and authenticity assurance—signals that the platform and its sellers can be depended upon (Parasuraman et al., 2005). The result is consistent with prior evidence that e-service quality is a robust antecedent of trust in online shopping (Blut, 2016; Qalati et al., 2021). In skincare content-commerce, where consumers are concerned about product authenticity and condition, service quality appears to operate as an important signal of seller reliability that reduces perceived risk.

H4: Service Quality → Perceived Value. Service Quality significantly influenced Perceived Value ($\beta = .145$, $t = 2.654$, $p = .008$), supporting H4. Responsive service reduces the effort and risk associated with the transaction, thereby enhancing the perceived value of participation (Shaikh et al., 2023; Qalati et al., 2021). The finding is consistent with the multidimensional service-quality literature, which holds that service excellence contributes to both relational and transactional evaluations. The slightly larger coefficient for Perceived Value than for Trust suggests that, in this sample, service quality's contribution to the benefit–sacrifice assessment is at least as important as its contribution to confidence-building.

H5: Convenience → Trust. Convenience significantly influenced Trust ($\beta = .149$, $t = 2.928$, $p = .003$), supporting H5. Convenient processes—streamlined search, integrated payment and simple checkout—signal that the platform is designed to serve consumers' needs, thereby contributing to confidence in its reliability (Berry et al., 2002; Seiders et al., 2007). The result aligns with the service-convenience literature and with evidence that online shopping convenience enhances favourable platform evaluations (Duarte et al., 2018). Although convenience is frequently treated as a value-related benefit, the present finding indicates that it also contributes to trust, likely through a competence-signalling mechanism.

H6: Convenience → Perceived Value. Convenience significantly influenced Perceived Value ($\beta = .162$, $t = 2.887$, $p = .004$), supporting H6. Convenience produced the largest coefficient among the antecedents of Perceived Value, consistent with service-convenience theory's core claim that time and effort saved constitute a fundamental benefit of the shopping experience (Berry et al., 2002; Seiders et al., 2007). Prior research similarly demonstrates that convenience enhances perceived value and repurchase intention in online shopping (Zeqiri et al., 2023). For time-constrained Generation Y consumers, the efficiency of the purchasing process appears to be the most important single contributor to value perception.

H7: Information Quantity → Trust. Information Quantity significantly influenced Trust ($\beta = .174$, $t = 3.849$, $p < .001$), supporting H7. A greater volume of reviews, ratings and comments provides social proof and reduces perceived uncertainty, thereby strengthening confidence in decision-making (Park et al., 2007; Hung et al., 2023). The significant, independent effect of Information Quantity alongside Information Quality reinforces their theoretical separation:

the abundance of information contributes to trust through social proof, whereas the accuracy of information contributes through credibility (Filieri, 2015). Neither dimension substitutes for the other.

H8: Information Quantity → Perceived Value. Information Quantity significantly influenced Perceived Value ($\beta = .103$, $t = 1.979$, $p = .048$), supporting H8. Sufficient information reduces the search and evaluation effort required before purchase, thereby enhancing the perceived worth of the platform experience (Blanco-Encomienda & Rosillo-Díaz, 2025). The smaller coefficient relative to H7 indicates that information quantity contributes more strongly to building trust than to value assessment, which parallels the differentiated effects observed for information quality. Taken together, H7 and H8 suggest that abundant information primarily reassures consumers, while its contribution to value is comparatively modest.

H9: Perceived Ease of Use → Trust. Perceived Ease of Use exhibited a positive but non-significant relationship with Trust ($\beta = .105$, $t = 1.960$, $p = .050$), so H9 was not supported. This result should be interpreted as marginal rather than as evidence that the relationship is clearly absent. The finding is consistent with the view that, among technologically experienced Generation Y consumers, interface ease of use may be taken for granted and therefore contributes little additional confidence in platform integrity (King & He, 2006; Davis, 1989). In this digitally familiar population, usability appears to be a necessary but insufficient condition for trust: informational and service-related dimensions carry greater weight in shaping confidence, while ease of use differentiates little among consumers who are already proficient platform users.

H10: Perceived Ease of Use → Perceived Value. Perceived Ease of Use significantly influenced Perceived Value ($\beta = .147$, $t = 2.270$, $p = .023$), supporting H10. An intuitive, efficient interface reduces the effort required to search, compare and transact, which directly enhances the perceived benefits of participation (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). The contrast between H10 and H9 is theoretically instructive: usability contributes to consumers' benefit assessments even when it does not independently build trust. This differentiated pattern extends TAM by demonstrating that ease-of-use effects are not uniform across psychological outcomes, and it suggests that usability investments yield returns primarily through value enhancement rather than through trust-building in this population.

Discussion of Trust, Perceived Value and eWOM Adoption

H11: Trust → eWOM Adoption. Trust significantly and positively influenced eWOM Adoption ($\beta = .216$, $t = 4.012$, $p < .001$), supporting H11. Consumers who trust the platform and its sellers are more likely to regard the reviews and recommendations encountered as credible and worth accepting (Gefen et al., 2003; Mayer et al., 1995). The result is consistent with the IAM, which holds that the credibility of the information source and environment conditions information adoption (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). In content-commerce, where commercial and sponsored content is pervasive, trust appears to function as a gatekeeper that determines whether eWOM is accepted as genuine or dismissed as persuasion.

H12: Perceived Value → eWOM Adoption. Perceived Value significantly and positively influenced eWOM Adoption ($\beta = .264$, $t = 4.804$, $p < .001$), supporting H12. Consumers who perceive value in the platform experience are more motivated to draw on available

information to support their decisions (Kim & Park, 2013). Notably, Perceived Value exhibited a stronger relationship with eWOM Adoption than did Trust, suggesting that the decision to accept and use online information is driven more by an assessment of whether doing so is worthwhile than by confidence in the platform alone. This ordering supports the decision to treat Trust and Perceived Value as parallel rather than sequential evaluations, and it highlights value perception as a particularly consequential driver of information adoption.

H13: eWOM Adoption → Purchase Intention. eWOM Adoption significantly and positively influenced Purchase Intention ($\beta = .323$, $t = 3.581$, $p < .001$), supporting H13 and producing the strongest downstream direct coefficient in the model. This confirms that the acceptance and use of online reviews and recommendations—rather than exposure to them—is the proximate driver of purchase intention (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Ismagilova et al., 2020). The magnitude of the effect underscores the central role of information adoption in translating platform experience into behavioural intention, and it is consistent with meta-analytic evidence that eWOM effectiveness operates through adoption rather than exposure (Verma et al., 2023).

Discussion of the Mediation Hypotheses

H14: Trust → eWOM Adoption → Purchase Intention. eWOM Adoption significantly mediated the relationship between Trust and Purchase Intention (specific indirect effect $\beta = .070$, $t = 2.576$, $p = .010$, 95% CI [.023, .129]), supporting H14. Because the auxiliary direct effect was also significant and positive ($\beta = .177$, $p < .001$), the pattern corresponds to complementary partial mediation (Zhao et al., 2010). The result indicates that trust contributes to purchase intention partly through consumers' adoption of eWOM information, consistent with the IAM logic that psychological evaluations become behaviourally consequential only insofar as they promote information adoption (Sussman & Siegal, 2003; Verma et al., 2023).

H15: Perceived Value → eWOM Adoption → Purchase Intention. eWOM Adoption also significantly mediated the relationship between Perceived Value and Purchase Intention (specific indirect effect $\beta = .085$, $t = 2.768$, $p = .006$, 95% CI [.031, .151]), supporting H15. The indirect effect associated with Perceived Value ($\beta = .085$) was somewhat larger than that associated with Trust ($\beta = .070$), mirroring the ordering of the direct effects on eWOM Adoption. This reinforces the finding that value perception is a particularly consequential antecedent of information adoption and, through it, of purchase intention. The results position eWOM Adoption as a genuine information-conversion mechanism rather than a mere correlate of purchase intention.

Discussion of the Moderation Hypothesis

H16: Moderating Role of Gender. Gender did not significantly moderate the eWOM Adoption–Purchase Intention relationship ($\beta = -.209$, $t = 1.869$, $p = .062$, 95% CI [–.421, .012]), so H16 was not supported. Although the simple slopes appeared to differ, the interaction did not reach significance and the effect size was negligible ($f^2 = .013$). This result is consistent with the position that gender differences in information processing are contingent on task and context rather than universal (Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015; Kanwal et al., 2022), and it cautions against assuming that adopted eWOM translates into purchase intention differently for male and female skincare consumers in this setting. The non-significant result also

contributes to delimiting the boundary conditions of eWOM theory and illustrates the value of transparently reporting null findings.

Synthesis of the Sixteen Hypothesis Discussions

Across the sixteen hypotheses, three broader patterns emerge. First, the platform environment is genuinely multidimensional: four of the five stimuli significantly predicted both Trust and Perceived Value, and the differentiated coefficient patterns show that Trust is most strongly driven by information-related attributes, whereas Perceived Value is most strongly driven by convenience. Second, Trust and Perceived Value function as parallel and complementary evaluations rather than as a single construct or a fixed sequence, with Perceived Value emerging as the stronger antecedent of eWOM Adoption. Third, eWOM Adoption operates as the pivotal mechanism through which these evaluations are converted into purchase intention, confirming that exposure to content is behaviourally consequential only when the information is adopted. Together, these patterns validate the SOR-IAM integration that underlies the research framework and provide a coherent, staged account of content-commerce consumer behaviour.

Implications, Limitations and Future Research

Theoretical Contributions

The study makes several theoretical contributions. First, it extends the SOR framework to a multidimensional content-commerce environment by conceptualising five distinct but interrelated platform stimuli, thereby moving beyond studies that examine isolated platform characteristics (Eroglu et al., 2001; Kim & Lennon, 2013). Second, it positions Trust and Perceived Value as two parallel and conceptually distinct organism variables, enriching the organism component of SOR and avoiding the restrictive assumption that one evaluation must precede the other (Gefen et al., 2003; Kim & Park, 2013). Third, it positions eWOM Adoption as an information-conversion mechanism, clarifying the transition from organism to response within SOR and demonstrating empirically that both Trust and Perceived Value operate on Purchase Intention through two parallel indirect mechanisms (Sussman & Siegal, 2003; Erkan & Evans, 2016). Fourth, by distinguishing Information Quality from Information Quantity, the study shows that these two dimensions are empirically distinct and exert differentiated effects, responding to calls to treat information quality and quantity as separate constructs (Hung et al., 2023). Fifth, the study extends the role of Perceived Ease of Use beyond its traditional technology-acceptance framing, showing that its effects are differentiated across psychological outcomes. Sixth, by transparently reporting the non-significant gender-moderation result and the marginal Perceived Ease of Use–Trust result, the study contributes to the broader effort to delimit the boundary conditions of eWOM and technology-acceptance theories and to reduce the publication bias associated with null findings (Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015; Kanwal et al., 2022). Finally, the study extends the contextual applicability of these theories by providing evidence from Malaysian Generation Y skincare consumers, an emerging-market population that combines high digital connectivity with culturally and religiously relevant product concerns (Isa et al., 2023).

Practical and Managerial Implications

The findings offer actionable implications for content-commerce stakeholders. First, because Information Quality is the strongest predictor of Trust, platform operators and skincare sellers should prioritise content accuracy, relevance, transparency and verification rather than

merely increasing the volume of reviews or promotional material; manipulated or misleading information undermines the very trust that platforms seek to build (Beck et al., 2024). Second, because Convenience is the strongest predictor of Perceived Value, investments in integrated payment, efficient search and streamlined checkout are likely to yield direct returns in consumers' value perceptions (Duarte et al., 2018). Third, because eWOM Adoption is the proximate driver of purchase intention, creators, brands and platforms should produce information that consumers judge credible and useful—through balanced, transparent and evidence-based communication—rather than pursuing exposure alone (Erkan & Evans, 2016).

Fourth, the relatively modest explained variance in Purchase Intention ($R^2 = .162$) indicates that platform and information conditions, while important, operate alongside price, brand familiarity, product suitability and other factors, and should therefore be understood as one component of a broader conversion strategy. Fifth, the non-significant gender moderation suggests that skincare marketers need not radically segment their eWOM strategy by gender in this context, although evidence-based segmentation should still be informed by broader consumer characteristics. Sixth, the findings carry implications for consumer protection and public policy in Malaysia. Because skincare products are subject to notification under the Control of Drugs and Cosmetics Regulations 1984 and because the Ministry of Health has repeatedly identified cosmetic products containing scheduled poisons, the reliability of platform information and the trustworthiness of eWOM are matters of consumer safety rather than of marketing convenience alone (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2024; National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency, 2026). Platforms and regulators can therefore treat accurate product information, disclosure of sponsored content and the removal of misleading reviews as mechanisms that support both commercial trust and public health, reinforcing the case for transparent and accountable content-commerce practices.

Limitations

The study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits causal inference; the results represent theoretically grounded structural associations rather than definitive evidence of temporal precedence. Second, the reliance on single-source, self-reported data remains susceptible to common method bias despite procedural remedies (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Third, Purchase Intention rather than actual purchase behaviour constitutes the final outcome. Fourth, the findings are bounded to Malaysia, to Generation Y, to the skincare category and to a pooled multi-platform perspective, and the model explains a bounded pathway that omits price, perceived risk, social influence and other variables. Fifth, Gender was examined only as a moderator of the final relationship, so its non-significant role here does not imply irrelevance elsewhere in the journey.

Future Research

Future research should adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to strengthen causal inference, extend the model from purchase intention to actual purchase behaviour, and examine cross-generational and cross-country (ASEAN) samples to assess the generalisability of the findings. Platform-specific comparative research would clarify whether the identified mechanisms operate uniformly across mainstream content-commerce platforms, and the inclusion of additional psychological and contextual constructs—including perceived risk, social influence, and AI-mediated recommendation mechanisms—would enrich the explanatory framework. Finally, alternative boundary conditions beyond gender, such as

product involvement, digital literacy and cultural values, warrant investigation. Longitudinal designs that track the conversion of adopted eWOM into observed purchases would be especially valuable, as would studies that distinguish authentic from sponsored or algorithmically amplified eWOM and examine how such distinctions condition information adoption.

Conclusion

This study examined how platform-related stimuli shape purchase intention among Malaysian Generation Y skincare consumers within mainstream content-commerce environments. Drawing on the SOR framework and the IAM, the study tested a staged model in which five platform characteristics influence Trust and Perceived Value, which in turn operate on Purchase Intention through eWOM Adoption. Based on survey data from 386 respondents analysed with PLS-SEM, the study found that twelve of thirteen direct hypotheses and both mediation hypotheses were supported, yielding fourteen supported hypotheses overall. The findings demonstrate that platform experience is converted into purchase intention not through exposure alone but through a sequence of favourable psychological evaluations and the adoption of decision-relevant electronic word-of-mouth. The study contributes an integrated, empirically validated account of content-commerce consumer behaviour and offers practical guidance for platform operators, skincare brands, sellers and creators seeking to convert consumer engagement into purchase intention in an increasingly content-driven digital marketplace.

In practical terms, the study indicates that platform operators and skincare sellers should treat information quality and convenience as strategic priorities, not merely as technical refinements, because these attributes drive the trust and perceived value that ultimately feed the adoption of eWOM and, through it, purchase intention. At the same time, the modest explained variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = .162$) is a reminder that platform conditions operate alongside price, brand, product suitability and other determinants, and that a content-commerce strategy must therefore be multidimensional. For Malaysian stakeholders operating within a regulated skincare market, the findings further underscore that trustworthy information and responsible eWOM are not only drivers of commercial conversion but also contributions to consumer protection and to the integrity of the digital economy.

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