

Platform-Related Stimuli and Purchase Intention in Content-Commerce: The Roles of Trust, Perceived Value, eWOM Adoption, and Gender among Malaysian Generation Y Skincare Consumers

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Abstract

Content-commerce integrates product information, social interaction, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), recommendation systems, and transactional functions within a unified consumer journey; however, existing research remains fragmented regarding how multidimensional platform-related characteristics jointly shape consumers' psychological evaluations, information adoption, and Purchase Intention. This study therefore develops an integrated framework. The framework proposes that Information Quality, Service Quality, Convenience, Information Quantity, and Perceived Ease of Use influence Purchase Intention through Trust, Perceived Value, and eWOM Adoption among Malaysian Generation Y skincare consumers. Drawing on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework and the Information Adoption Model (IAM), the study conceptualises the five platform-related characteristics as stimuli, Trust and Perceived Value as psychological evaluations, eWOM Adoption as the information-adoption mechanism, and Purchase Intention as the behavioural response. Gender is further proposed as a boundary condition in the eWOM Adoption–Purchase Intention relationship. For subsequent empirical validation, the study proposes a positivist, deductive, quantitative, and cross-sectional design using non-probability purposive sampling; minimum sample adequacy will be determined through G*Power, while the proposed model will be evaluated using PLS-SEM in SmartPLS 4. The study contributes in two ways. It integrates platform-related, psychological, and information-adoption perspectives within a coherent multistage framework and clarifies conceptually related constructs. The framework also delineates theoretical, conceptual, practical, and national-level implications for content-commerce platforms, skincare brands, retailers, and digital marketers, and offers insights for strengthening Malaysia's consumer-oriented digital-commerce ecosystem.

Keywords: Content-Commerce, Platform-Related Stimuli, Trust, Perceived Value, Electronic Word-Of-Mouth Adoption, Purchase Intention

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has fundamentally reshaped the global retail landscape, giving rise to content-commerce as an emerging digital commerce paradigm that integrates social interaction, creator-generated content, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), recommendation systems, and online transactions within a unified consumer journey. Traditional e-commerce consumers generally enter online marketplaces with predefined purchasing goals. Content-commerce differs. It enables consumers to discover products through short-form videos, livestreaming, user-generated content, and algorithm-driven recommendations before developing explicit purchase intentions. Consequently, product discovery, information search, social interaction, product evaluation, and purchasing decisions increasingly occur simultaneously within platform ecosystems, transforming how consumers acquire, process, and utilise information during online shopping.

Malaysia provides a relevant context for examining content-commerce because social-commerce platforms have become increasingly embedded in consumers' online shopping activities, and recent Malaysian evidence indicates that trust, electronic word-of-mouth, and technology-related perceptions remain important in explaining social-commerce shopping intention (Wan Nawang et al., 2025). Within this environment, Generation Y represents a theoretically relevant consumer group because its members have substantial experience with digital technologies, social media, and online shopping, while skincare purchasing provides a particularly suitable product context because consumers commonly evaluate product suitability, ingredients, authenticity, expected effectiveness, potential risks, and other users' experiences before purchase. Consequently, skincare decisions in content-commerce environments are likely to depend strongly on platform-mediated information and electronic word-of-mouth.

The first research gap concerns the fragmented investigation of platform-related characteristics. Existing studies commonly examine Information Quality, Service Quality, Convenience, Information Quantity, or Perceived Ease of Use as isolated antecedents or combine only selected constructs within specific platform contexts. Comparatively limited research has simultaneously investigated these informational, service-related, process-related, and technological characteristics within a unified conceptual framework, and as a result current literature provides limited understanding of how multidimensional platform-related stimuli collectively influence consumers' evaluations and behavioural responses throughout the content-commerce purchasing process.

The second research gap concerns the psychological mechanisms underlying consumer decision-making. Although Trust and Perceived Value have both been widely recognised as important determinants of online purchasing behaviour, previous studies frequently examine these constructs independently or position them as parallel predictors of Purchase Intention without adequately explaining their complementary roles in the consumer decision-making process. Trust primarily reflects consumers' confidence in the platform, seller, or transaction environment under conditions of uncertainty, whereas Perceived Value represents consumers' overall evaluation of benefits relative to monetary and non-monetary sacrifices.

Consequently, these constructs represent distinct psychological evaluations that should be examined simultaneously rather than treated as interchangeable determinants of purchasing behaviour.

The third research gap concerns the information-processing mechanism through which electronic word-of-mouth influences purchasing behaviour. Existing studies frequently establish direct relationships between eWOM and Purchase Intention or emphasise information credibility, usefulness, and review quality, whereas comparatively less attention has been devoted to understanding whether consumers actually adopt and incorporate electronic information into their purchasing decisions. Exposure to online reviews, creator recommendations, or consumer comments does not necessarily imply that such information is accepted and utilised during decision-making; consequently, the cognitive mechanism through which consumers convert external electronic information into behavioural intention remains insufficiently explained within existing content-commerce research.

These research gaps are particularly salient in the Malaysian skincare market, where consumers are continuously exposed to creator content, livestream demonstrations, reviews, and algorithmic recommendations, and where the effects of technology-related characteristics such as Perceived Ease of Use are not consistently supported (Wan Nawang et al., 2025). Such findings indicate that platform characteristics are unlikely to influence Purchase Intention through simple direct relationships. Instead, they operate through multiple stages of psychological evaluation and information processing.

To address the identified research gaps, the present study adopts the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) as its overarching theoretical foundation, because this framework provides a comprehensive behavioural perspective for explaining how external environmental stimuli are transformed into internal psychological evaluations before generating behavioural responses. Within the context of content-commerce, Information Quality, Service Quality, Convenience, Information Quantity, and Perceived Ease of Use are conceptualised as multidimensional platform-related stimuli that shape consumers' cognitive and affective evaluations. Trust and Perceived Value represent two complementary psychological evaluations within the Organism stage, while Purchase Intention represents the final Behavioural Response.

To further explain how external information is transformed into purchasing behaviour, this study integrates the Information Adoption Model (IAM) (Sussman & Siegal, 2003) into the proposed framework. While the S–O–R framework explains the overall progression from environmental stimuli to behavioural outcomes, IAM provides a complementary explanation of the cognitive mechanism through which consumers evaluate, accept, and incorporate electronic word-of-mouth into their purchasing decisions; accordingly, eWOM Adoption is positioned as the information-processing mechanism linking consumers' psychological evaluations with their subsequent Purchase Intention. Rather than functioning as competing theoretical perspectives, S–O–R and IAM are integrated to explain different stages of the same consumer decision-making process.

In addition, the Information Systems Success perspective (DeLone & McLean, 2003) and the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) provide construct-level theoretical support for

selected antecedents included in the proposed framework. Specifically, the Information Systems Success perspective provides theoretical justification for Information Quality and Service Quality, while the Technology Acceptance Model supports the inclusion of Perceived Ease of Use as an important technology-related characteristic; these theories support individual constructs but do not replace the overarching explanatory roles of the S–O–R framework and the Information Adoption Model.

Building on the theoretical perspectives outlined above and the three research gaps identified, this study addresses three research questions:

RQ1: How do platform-related stimuli—Information Quality, Service Quality, Convenience, Information Quantity, and Perceived Ease of Use—jointly shape Malaysian Generation Y skincare consumers' Trust and Perceived Value in content-commerce?

RQ2: How do Trust and Perceived Value influence consumers' adoption of electronic word-of-mouth, and how does eWOM Adoption subsequently contribute to Purchase Intention?

RQ3: Does the relationship between eWOM Adoption and Purchase Intention differ between male and female consumers?

To answer these research questions, the present study aims to develop an integrated framework explaining how five platform-related stimuli—Information Quality, Service Quality, Convenience, Information Quantity, and Perceived Ease of Use—influence consumers' Trust and Perceived Value, how these psychological evaluations subsequently influence eWOM Adoption, and how eWOM Adoption contributes to Purchase Intention among Malaysian Generation Y skincare consumers. The study further proposes Gender as a boundary condition in the relationship between eWOM Adoption and Purchase Intention. Theoretically, the S–O–R framework provides the overarching behavioural architecture, while IAM explains the information-adoption mechanism. The Information Systems Success perspective and TAM provide construct-level support for Information Quality, Service Quality, and Perceived Ease of Use.

To provide a systematic basis for subsequent empirical validation, the study will adopt a positivist and deductive quantitative approach using a cross-sectional survey design. Malaysian Generation Y consumers with relevant skincare content-commerce experience will be recruited through non-probability purposive sampling. Minimum sample adequacy will be determined using G*Power. The measurement and structural models will subsequently be evaluated using PLS-SEM in SmartPLS 4, following the methodological recommendations of Hair et al. (2022).

This study makes theoretical, conceptual, practical, and national contributions. Theoretically, it integrates multidimensional platform stimuli, parallel psychological evaluations, and information adoption within a coherent multistage decision-making framework. Conceptually, it distinguishes constructs that are frequently conflated in previous research, particularly Information Quality versus Information Quantity, Convenience versus Perceived Ease of Use, Trust versus Perceived Value, and eWOM exposure versus eWOM Adoption. Practically, the framework provides guidance for content-commerce platforms, skincare brands, retailers, and content creators regarding the conditions that are expected to strengthen consumer trust, value perception, information adoption, and purchasing intention. At the national level, the

study offers insights relevant to the development of a more trustworthy, consumer-oriented, and competitive digital-commerce ecosystem in Malaysia.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Theoretical Foundation

Stimulus–Organism–Response Framework

The Stimulus–Organism–Response framework originated from environmental psychology. It proposes that external environmental conditions influence an individual's internal emotional or cognitive state, which subsequently produces behavioural responses (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In digital consumer research, the framework is particularly useful because online purchasing behaviour occurs within constructed technological environments, where interface characteristics, information cues, seller characteristics, social interaction, recommendation systems, and service experiences can function as stimuli that influence internal consumer evaluations before generating behavioural intentions.

In content-commerce, consumers respond to multiple platform cues simultaneously. Five focal characteristics are investigated in this study. They are therefore conceptualised as Stimuli: Information Quality, Service Quality, Convenience, Information Quantity, and Perceived Ease of Use. Trust and Perceived Value are positioned as Organismic evaluations because they reflect the consumer's internal judgement of uncertainty, reliability, benefits, and sacrifices. Purchase Intention constitutes the behavioural Response.

However, contemporary content-commerce decisions contain an additional information-processing stage. Consumers do not necessarily form Purchase Intention immediately after developing trust or perceiving value. They are continually exposed to reviews, recommendations, comments, demonstrations, and creator-generated content and must decide whether that external information should influence their own judgment; consequently, eWOM Adoption is placed between Organism and Response as a proximal cognitive mechanism. This extension preserves the central S–O–R logic while incorporating information adoption into the digital consumer journey.

Recent research continues to demonstrate the usefulness of S–O–R in social-commerce settings, reporting that interactive or platform-related stimuli can influence internal states such as trust, social relationship quality, perceived value, or engagement before influencing Purchase Intention. For instance, Zhu et al. (2020) apply the S–O–R framework to social commerce. They demonstrate how online reviews, as platform-related stimuli, shape consumers' internal evaluations and subsequently influence purchase intention. These findings support the use of S–O–R as an overall architecture while also indicating that the specific psychological mechanisms need to be matched to the research context.

Information Adoption Model

The Information Adoption Model explains how individuals evaluate information and determine whether it should be incorporated into their decisions, integrating insights from information-processing and technology-related perspectives and traditionally emphasising information quality, source credibility, perceived usefulness, and information adoption (Sussman & Siegal, 2003).

The distinction between exposure and adoption is particularly important in content-commerce. Consumers may scroll through hundreds of reviews, comments, videos, and recommendations, but only a limited proportion becomes cognitively influential; eWOM Adoption occurs when consumers accept and use external electronic information as an input into judgement and decision-making.

Contemporary research supports the continuing relevance of this mechanism. Acikgoz et al. (2024) develop an integrated model of information adoption and trust in mobile social commerce and highlight the importance of combining informational and trust-related processes. Research applying extended IAM models also demonstrates that information-related characteristics can influence usefulness, adoption, and subsequent Purchase Intention (Song et al., 2021); accordingly, IAM provides the mechanism-level foundation of the proposed model, explaining why favourable psychological evaluations are expected to increase consumers' willingness to rely on and adopt eWOM.

Information Systems Success and Technology Acceptance Perspectives

The Information Systems Success Model identifies Information Quality, System Quality, and Service Quality as central determinants of system use and user outcomes (DeLone & McLean, 2003). In the present model, this perspective provides construct-level support for Information Quality and Service Quality; the purpose is not to reproduce the complete IS Success Model but to recognise that consumers' evaluations of information and service performance constitute important environmental conditions of platform use.

TAM similarly provides focused theoretical support for Perceived Ease of Use. Davis (1989) defines Perceived Ease of Use as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system will be free of effort. Although TAM traditionally examines usefulness and technology acceptance, PEOU remains relevant in content-commerce. Friction in navigation, product discovery, checkout, payment, or feature use may influence consumer evaluations.

The theoretical architecture is therefore hierarchical: S–O–R explains the overall process, IAM explains information adoption, the IS Success perspective grounds information and service quality, and TAM supports technology-related ease of use.

Platform-Related Stimuli and Psychological Evaluations

Information Quality

Information Quality refers to the degree to which information available to consumers is accurate, relevant, complete, understandable, reliable, timely, and useful for decision-making; in content-commerce, it may include product specifications, seller descriptions, creator demonstrations, customer reviews, comments, product-comparison information, and other forms of platform-mediated content.

High-quality information can reduce information asymmetry between consumers and sellers. Online consumers cannot physically inspect products and therefore depend on mediated information to assess performance, suitability, risks, and expected outcomes. When platform information is consistent, relevant, detailed, and reliable, uncertainty decreases. Consumers are also more likely to believe that the platform and its commercial actors operate competently and honestly. Information Quality should therefore strengthen Trust.

Information Quality can also improve Perceived Value. Useful information reduces search costs and supports more efficient evaluation of alternatives. A consumer who can easily obtain accurate information about product characteristics, prices, reviews, seller performance, and expected outcomes gains informational benefits. Less time and cognitive effort are sacrificed. Consequently, the overall benefit–sacrifice evaluation becomes more favourable.

Recent social-commerce research continues to identify information characteristics as antecedents of trust and Purchase Intention; Medina-Quintero (2024), for instance, demonstrates that information and ease-of-use characteristics contribute to trust as an antecedent of online Purchase Intention. Recent social-commerce research further demonstrates that trust remains an important psychological mechanism through which consumers evaluate platform-related conditions before developing Purchase Intention (Senali et al., 2024).

Therefore:

H1a: Information Quality has a positive effect on Trust.

H1b: Information Quality has a positive effect on Perceived Value.

Service Quality

Service Quality refers to consumers' perceptions of the reliability, responsiveness, fulfilment, customer support, problem resolution, and overall service performance associated with the platform or seller; in content-commerce, service experiences extend beyond the technological interface to include order processing, communication, payment support, logistics, returns, complaints, and post-purchase assistance.

Reliable service reduces transaction uncertainty. When consumers believe that the platform or seller responds quickly, fulfils promises, resolves problems, and provides adequate support, the risk associated with online transactions becomes lower. Service Quality should therefore strengthen Trust.

Service Quality also creates value. It reduces the non-monetary costs of a transaction. Responsive support, reliable fulfilment, smooth returns, and effective problem resolution save consumers time and effort while improving the expected benefits of purchasing. Recent evidence from social commerce identifies meaningful relationships among Service Quality, Perceived Value, satisfaction, and loyalty-related outcomes (Yum, 2024), supporting the proposition that service performance contributes to consumers' value assessments.

Therefore:

H2a: Service Quality has a positive effect on Trust.

H2b: Service Quality has a positive effect on Perceived Value.

Convenience

Convenience refers to the extent to which consumers can complete the shopping journey with minimal time and effort, encompassing multiple stages of the purchasing process, including information search, comparison, ordering, payment, delivery, communication, and post-purchase activities. Service-convenience research emphasises that consumers evaluate convenience according to the time and effort required to obtain and use a service (Berry et al., 2002). In online shopping environments, convenience has also been shown to enhance

consumer evaluations and encourage favourable electronic word-of-mouth (Duarte et al., 2018).

Convenience is conceptually distinct from Perceived Ease of Use. Whereas Convenience reflects efficiency across the broader consumer journey, Perceived Ease of Use focuses specifically on the effort required to interact with a technological system; in content-commerce, predictable and frictionless purchasing processes can reduce perceived transaction complexity and signal platform competence, thereby strengthening Trust.

Convenience is also expected to enhance Perceived Value. Lower time, effort, and psychological costs improve the consumer's overall benefit–sacrifice evaluation. A platform that integrates product discovery, information evaluation, social interaction, payment, and fulfilment within a smooth purchasing journey can therefore increase the value consumers perceive from the exchange.

Accordingly:

H3a: Convenience has a positive effect on Trust.

H3b: Convenience has a positive effect on Perceived Value.

Information Quantity

Information Quantity refers to the perceived availability and sufficiency of product-related information, including reviews, ratings, comments, demonstrations, questions and answers, user experiences, and other electronic opinions. It must be conceptually distinguished from Information Quality. Quantity reflects how much information is available; quality reflects how useful and reliable that information is.

A sufficient volume of information can increase Trust. Repeated observations and multiple independent opinions may reduce uncertainty and provide social verification. Consumers are less dependent on a single information source when numerous relevant reviews and experiences are available, although excessive information may eventually create overload, meaning that the relationship may not always be strictly linear. The present study nevertheless examines the dominant positive expectation within ordinary levels of information availability. Information Quantity may also improve Perceived Value by reducing search uncertainty and increasing the perceived diagnosticity of the platform. Consumers can compare experiences and identify patterns without leaving the platform, reducing information-search costs, and extended IAM research has previously identified information quantity as relevant to consumers' information-processing and purchasing decisions (Song et al., 2021).

Therefore:

H4a: Information Quantity has a positive effect on Trust.

H4b: Information Quantity has a positive effect on Perceived Value.

Perceived Ease of Use

Perceived Ease of Use refers to the degree to which consumers believe that interacting with a technological system requires little effort (Davis, 1989); in a content-commerce context, this includes learning platform functions, navigating content, locating products, reviewing information, interacting with sellers or creators, adding items to a cart, completing payments, and managing orders.

PEOU may strengthen Trust because a clear, stable, and understandable interface reduces technological uncertainty. When users can easily understand the platform and control their interactions, they may perceive the environment as more predictable and competent, and recent research continues to associate ease of use with trust and purchasing responses in social-commerce contexts (Medina-Quintero, 2024).

PEOU is also expected to increase Perceived Value. Ease of interaction reduces effort costs. A platform that requires less learning, navigation, and operational effort allows consumers to obtain informational and transactional benefits more efficiently.

Nevertheless, recent Malaysian evidence suggests that PEOU may not always directly predict social-commerce shopping intention (Wan Nawang et al., 2025). This inconsistency matters. It strengthens the rationale for investigating indirect pathways through psychological evaluations rather than assuming an unconditional direct effect on Purchase Intention.

Therefore:

H5a: Perceived Ease of Use has a positive effect on Trust.

H5b: Perceived Ease of Use has a positive effect on Perceived Value.

Trust

Trust is a fundamental construct in online commerce because transactions occur under uncertainty, and consumers may lack complete knowledge about sellers, product quality, platform governance, fulfilment reliability, or the authenticity of online information. Trust reduces perceived vulnerability by allowing consumers to rely on the platform or commercial environment despite incomplete control. Online trust research further distinguishes among dispositional, institutional, and interpersonal forms of trust, conceptualising trust as a willingness to depend on another party under conditions of risk and uncertainty (McKnight et al., 2002; Kim et al., 2008). The present study adopts this willingness-to-rely conceptualisation. It is particularly suitable for content-commerce transactions that combine seller, platform, and information-related sources of uncertainty.

In the proposed framework, Trust is not treated as equivalent to information credibility: credibility refers to whether a specific message or source is believable, whereas Trust concerns a broader willingness to rely on a relational or transactional object. This distinction is especially important in content-commerce because consumers may believe an individual review while still distrusting the seller or platform.

Trust is expected to facilitate eWOM Adoption. Consumers are more willing to incorporate information into their decisions when they perceive the surrounding information and transaction environment as reliable, and recent research integrating trust with IAM supports the importance of trust in post-adoption and information-related social-commerce behaviour (Acikgoz et al., 2024). Malaysian social-commerce evidence also identifies Trust as a significant predictor of shopping intention (Wan Nawang et al., 2025).

Therefore:

H6: Trust has a positive effect on eWOM Adoption.

Perceived Value

Perceived Value represents a consumer's overall evaluation of the benefits received relative to the sacrifices made (Zeithaml, 1988); benefits may include functional utility, information,

convenience, enjoyment, social value, economic savings, and decision confidence, while sacrifices may include price, time, effort, risk, and psychological cost.

Perceived Value is conceptually different from Trust. Consumers can trust a platform without perceiving a specific purchase as sufficiently valuable, and they may recognise strong economic value while still remaining uncertain about the seller. Treating the two as parallel psychological evaluations therefore provides greater conceptual clarity than combining them into a single favourable-attitude construct.

When consumers perceive that the platform provides meaningful benefits relative to the monetary and non-monetary costs involved, electronic information becomes more useful as an input into decision-making. From an information-adoption perspective, consumers are more likely to incorporate external information when it is perceived as relevant and capable of improving their evaluation of available alternatives (Sussman & Siegal, 2003; Cheung et al., 2008), and Perceived Value may therefore increase consumers' motivation to use reviews, comments, demonstrations, and recommendations as decision-relevant information.

Recent social-commerce research also demonstrates that Perceived Value remains an important psychological mechanism associated with consumer behavioural responses (Kakkar et al., 2025; Yum, 2024); extending these findings, the present study proposes that Perceived Value influences Purchase Intention indirectly by increasing consumers' willingness to adopt available eWOM.

Therefore:

H7: Perceived Value has a positive effect on eWOM Adoption.

eWOM Adoption and the Multistage Decision-Making Mechanism

eWOM Adoption

Electronic word-of-mouth refers to consumer-generated or digitally transmitted opinions. These opinions concern products, services, sellers, or brands and are available to other consumers. eWOM can take many forms, including written reviews, ratings, comments, creator recommendations, short-video demonstrations, livestream discussions, community posts, and social-media conversations. Since the foundational work of Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) on consumer-opinion platforms, eWOM has been recognised as a central influence on consumer decision-making, and meta-analytic evidence confirms a robust positive association between eWOM and purchase intention (Ismagilova et al., 2020).

eWOM Adoption represents a more advanced stage than exposure. Consumers adopt eWOM when they accept and incorporate external information into their own evaluation and decision process, a mechanism central to IAM and especially relevant to content-commerce, where consumer decisions are surrounded by continuously updated peer and creator information. Adopted eWOM can increase Purchase Intention by reducing uncertainty, validating product evaluations, shaping expectations, and strengthening decision confidence; once consumers incorporate electronic information into their judgement, that information becomes behaviourally consequential rather than merely visible.

Empirical research has repeatedly linked information adoption to Purchase Intention (Erkan & Evans, 2016), while recent Malaysian evidence also demonstrates that eWOM significantly contributes to social-commerce shopping intention (Wan Nawang et al., 2025). Thus:

H8: eWOM Adoption has a positive effect on Purchase Intention.

Indirect Decision-Making Mechanism

The proposed model assumes that content-commerce purchasing is a multistage rather than a purely direct process. Platform-related stimuli first shape consumers' internal psychological evaluations. Trust reflects whether the content-commerce environment is perceived as sufficiently reliable, whereas Perceived Value reflects whether the expected benefits justify the monetary and non-monetary sacrifices involved, and these psychological evaluations subsequently influence whether consumers adopt available eWOM, which in turn affects Purchase Intention.

This mechanism extends conventional direct-effect models. It explains how external platform conditions are transformed into behavioural intention through psychological evaluation and information adoption. It also integrates the S–O–R framework and the Information Adoption Model without conceptually conflating their explanatory roles: S–O–R provides the overarching progression from external stimuli to internal evaluation and behavioural response, whereas IAM explains the cognitive process through which external electronic information is accepted and incorporated into decision-making.

Notably, the framework specifies full rather than partial mediation: Trust and Perceived Value are not proposed to influence Purchase Intention directly, because in content-commerce favourable evaluations are expected to become behaviourally consequential only after consumers accept and incorporate available electronic information into their judgement. This specification is consistent with the information-adoption perspective. This perspective holds that external information must be judged useful and adopted before it shapes behaviour (Sussman & Siegal, 2003; Filieri & McLeay, 2014). It is also particularly appropriate for high-involvement skincare purchases. Authenticity, suitability, and risk concerns lead consumers to rely on corroborating peer and creator information before committing to a purchase. Consequently, eWOM Adoption is expected to transmit the influence of Trust and Perceived Value onto Purchase Intention.

Accordingly, eWOM Adoption is expected to mediate the relationships between Trust and Purchase Intention and between Perceived Value and Purchase Intention.

H9a: eWOM Adoption mediates the relationship between Trust and Purchase Intention.

H9b: eWOM Adoption mediates the relationship between Perceived Value and Purchase Intention.

Gender, Research Gaps, and the Hypothesised Framework

Gender as a Boundary Condition

Gender has long been examined as a source of variation in consumer information processing and decision-making. The selectivity perspective suggests that male and female consumers may differ in the extent to which they attend to, integrate, and utilise available information during judgement formation (Meyers-Levy, 1989), and such differences provide a theoretical basis for examining whether consumers convert adopted electronic information into behavioural intention in the same manner.

Gender differences have also been examined in contemporary social-commerce research. For instance, Venkatesh et al. (2003) demonstrate that the effects of technology-related determinants on behavioural intention differ between men and women, while Meyers-Levy and Loken (2015) synthesise the conditions under which gender differences in information processing emerge, illustrating the continued relevance of Gender as a potential boundary condition in digital purchasing behaviour. However, previous findings do not establish a universally consistent directional Gender effect. Accordingly, the present study does not predict that the eWOM Adoption–Purchase Intention relationship will necessarily be stronger for either male or female consumers.

In the present framework, Gender is therefore positioned specifically as a boundary condition in the relationship between eWOM Adoption and Purchase Intention. eWOM Adoption indicates that consumers have accepted electronic information as relevant to their decision-making; however, the extent to which such adopted information is subsequently converted into behavioural intention may differ across Gender groups.

Accordingly:

H10: The strength of the positive relationship between eWOM Adoption and Purchase Intention differs significantly between male and female consumers.

Research Gap and Proposed Framework

The preceding literature review reveals three overarching research gaps. First, a platform-integration gap remains. Information Quality, Service Quality, Convenience, Information Quantity, and Perceived Ease of Use have frequently been examined individually or in selected combinations, and as a result limited research explains how informational, service-related, process-related, and technological platform characteristics jointly shape consumer psychological evaluations within a unified content-commerce framework.

Second, a psychological and information-processing mechanism gap remains. Although Trust, Perceived Value, eWOM, and Purchase Intention have received considerable research attention, existing studies frequently examine these constructs through isolated or direct relationships; the present study addresses this limitation by positioning Trust and Perceived Value as parallel organismic evaluations and eWOM Adoption as the subsequent cognitive mechanism.

Third, a boundary-condition gap remains. Although Gender differences have been acknowledged in digital-consumer research, comparatively limited attention has been devoted to whether male and female consumers differ in the extent to which adopted eWOM is converted into Purchase Intention. Accordingly, the present study positions Gender specifically as a boundary condition in the eWOM Adoption–Purchase Intention relationship rather than as a general moderator of the entire structural model.

These research gaps are addressed through an integrated theoretical architecture in which the S–O–R framework explains the overall Stimulus–Organism–Response process, IAM explains the information-adoption mechanism, the Information Systems Success perspective supports Information Quality and Service Quality, and TAM provides construct-level grounding for Perceived Ease of Use. The resulting framework and proposed hypotheses are summarised below.

Table 1.

Construct Definitions and Theoretical Grounding

Construct	Operational Definition	Theoretical Grounding	Representative References
Information Quality (IQ)	The extent to which product-related information provided on the content-commerce platform is accurate, complete, reliable, relevant, timely, and useful for consumer decision-making.	Information Systems Success (IS Success) perspective; positioned as an environmental Stimulus within the S–O–R framework.	DeLone & McLean (2003); Filieri & McLeay (2014)
Service Quality (SQ)	Consumers' overall evaluation of the quality, responsiveness, reliability, and effectiveness of services provided by the platform and online sellers.	Information Systems Success (IS Success) perspective; positioned as an environmental Stimulus within the S–O–R framework.	DeLone & McLean (2003); Parasuraman et al. (2005)
Convenience (CON)	The extent to which consumers perceive that purchasing through the platform saves time and effort throughout the shopping process.	Service Convenience literature; positioned as an environmental Stimulus within the S–O–R framework.	Berry et al. (2002); Duarte et al. (2018)
Information Quantity (IQT)	The perceived sufficiency and richness of product-related information, including reviews, ratings, comments, and demonstrations available on the platform.	Electronic word-of-mouth and information-processing literature; positioned as an environmental Stimulus within the S–O–R framework.	Park et al. (2007); Cheung et al. (2008)
Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)	The extent to which consumers believe that interacting with the content-commerce platform requires minimal effort.	Technology Acceptance Model (TAM); positioned as an environmental Stimulus within the S–O–R framework.	Davis (1989); Venkatesh et al. (2003)
Trust (TR)	Consumers' willingness to rely on the platform, sellers, and transaction environment under conditions of uncertainty.	Online Trust literature; positioned as an internal psychological evaluation (Organism) within the S–O–R framework.	Gefen et al. (2003); Pavlou (2003)
Perceived Value (PV)	Consumers' overall assessment of the benefits received relative to the monetary and non-monetary sacrifices associated with purchasing.	Perceived Value literature; positioned as an internal psychological evaluation (Organism) within the S–O–R framework.	Zeithaml (1988); Sweeney & Soutar (2001)
eWOM Adoption (EA)	The extent to which consumers accept, internalise, and utilise electronic word-of-mouth information in their purchasing decisions.	Information Adoption Model (IAM); functions as the information-processing mechanism linking psychological evaluation to behavioural response.	Sussman & Siegal (2003); Cheung et al. (2008)
Purchase Intention (PI)	Consumers' willingness and likelihood to purchase products through content-commerce platforms in the near future.	Behavioural Response within the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework.	Dodds et al. (1991); Pavlou (2003)

Note. The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework serves as the overarching theoretical foundation of this study. The Information Adoption Model (IAM) explains the information-processing mechanism through which consumers adopt electronic word-of-mouth. The Information Systems Success (IS Success) perspective and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provide construct-level theoretical support for specific antecedent variables rather than functioning as independent overarching theories.

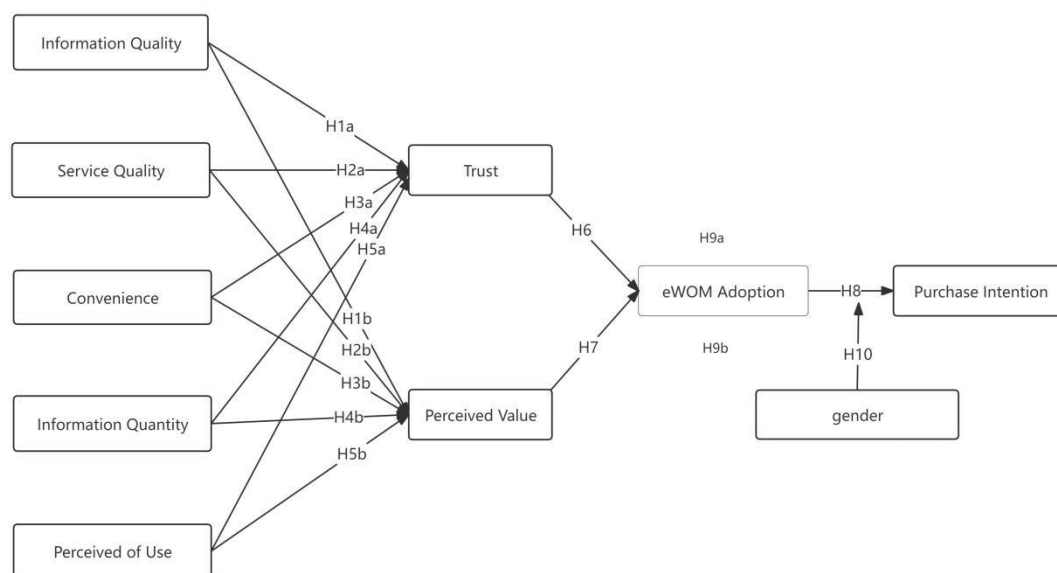
Table 2.

Summary of Proposed Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Proposed Relationship
H1a	Information Quality has a positive effect on Trust.
H1b	Information Quality has a positive effect on Perceived Value.
H2a	Service Quality has a positive effect on Trust.
H2b	Service Quality has a positive effect on Perceived Value.
H3a	Convenience has a positive effect on Trust.
H3b	Convenience has a positive effect on Perceived Value.
H4a	Information Quantity has a positive effect on Trust.
H4b	Information Quantity has a positive effect on Perceived Value.
H5a	Perceived Ease of Use has a positive effect on Trust.
H5b	Perceived Ease of Use has a positive effect on Perceived Value.
H6	Trust has a positive effect on eWOM Adoption.
H7	Perceived Value has a positive effect on eWOM Adoption.
H8	eWOM Adoption has a positive effect on Purchase Intention.
H9a	eWOM Adoption mediates the relationship between Trust and Purchase Intention.
H9b	eWOM Adoption mediates the relationship between Perceived Value and Purchase Intention.
H10	The strength of the positive relationship between eWOM Adoption and Purchase Intention differs significantly between male and female consumers.

The resulting conceptual framework can be expressed as:

Figure 1. Research Framework Based on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Framework and Information Adoption Model (IAM)

*Proposed Methodology for Subsequent Empirical Validation*

Because the present study develops and proposes an integrated conceptual framework, no empirical data are collected within the scope of this paper. This section outlines the methodological protocol that will be employed in a subsequent empirical study to validate the proposed framework. The design described below is therefore prescriptive rather than descriptive: all procedures are stated in the future tense and will be implemented in the follow-up data-collection stage.

Research Onion and Overall Research Design

The methodological design follows the Research Onion of Saunders et al. (2023). This design aligns research philosophy, theory-development approach, methodological choice, strategy, time horizon, and analytical procedures. The study adopts positivism and a deductive approach, using a quantitative mono-method survey design because the focal constructs represent consumer perceptions and behavioural intentions measurable with validated multi-item scales, and a cross-sectional time horizon will be adopted, with SPSS used for preliminary screening and SmartPLS 4 for PLS-SEM assessment.

Target Population and Unit of Analysis

The target population comprises Malaysian Generation Y consumers. They are operationally defined as individuals born between 1981 and 1996 who have relevant experience purchasing skincare products through content-commerce platforms. The individual consumer constitutes the unit of analysis. Respondents must possess sufficient exposure to skincare-related content-commerce activities and relevant purchasing experience to provide meaningful evaluations of the constructs included in the proposed model.

Sampling Technique

No complete sampling frame exists for Malaysian Generation Y consumers who purchase skincare products through content-commerce platforms. Probability sampling is therefore not feasible. Accordingly, the study will employ non-probability purposive sampling, which is appropriate when participants must satisfy predefined eligibility criteria and possess direct experience of the phenomenon under investigation (Saunders et al., 2023).

Eligible respondents will be required to meet four criteria: they must (1) belong to Generation Y, defined as individuals born between 1981 and 1996; (2) reside in Malaysia; (3) have prior exposure to skincare-related content on content-commerce platforms such as TikTok Shop; and (4) have previous experience purchasing skincare products through such platforms. Respondents who do not satisfy these criteria will be excluded.

Sample Size Determination

An a priori statistical power analysis will be conducted using G*Power 3.1. It will establish the minimum sample size required for subsequent empirical testing (Faul et al., 2009). The calculation is based on linear multiple regression with five predictors. These predictors represent the maximum number of exogenous constructs predicting a single endogenous construct in the proposed structural model. Using a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, and statistical power of 0.95, the analysis is expected to indicate a minimum required sample size of approximately 138 respondents. Because Section 3.10 subsequently proposes a multigroup analysis by Gender, a larger target sample (≥ 200 usable responses, with a minimum of approximately 100 per group) is recommended, following the heuristic of ≥ 100 observations per group for PLS-MGA and the minimum group-size requirements for PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2022).

The ten-times rule will serve only as a supplementary reference.

Questionnaire Development and Measurement

A structured questionnaire contains screening questions, construct measurement items, and demographic information. The measurement section comprises 34 items representing nine

latent constructs, all adapted from previously validated scales with minor wording modifications for the Malaysian content-commerce and skincare context, to maintain conceptual consistency, content validity, and the theoretical meaning of the original measures. All constructs are specified as reflective measurement models, measured on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree). Gender is measured as a binary categorical variable (0 = male; 1 = female) and used as the grouping variable for the multigroup analysis. Table 3 summarises the measurement sources.

Table 3.

Measurement Sources

Construct	No. of Items	Scale Type	Example Item	Measurement Source
Information Quality	6	Reflective	The comments found on the platform provide comprehensive information.	Blanco-Encomienda & Rosillo-Díaz (2025)
Service Quality	3	Reflective	Social commerce sellers respond quickly to customer inquiries.	Herzallah et al. (2025)
Convenience	4	Reflective	Shopping on this platform allows me to save time.	Jiang et al. (2013)
Information Quantity	3	Reflective	There is sufficient product-related information available on the platform.	Blanco-Encomienda & Rosillo-Díaz (2025)
Perceived Ease of Use	3	Reflective	Learning to use this platform is easy for me.	Davis (1989)
Trust	5	Reflective	I trust this content-commerce platform.	Do et al. (2025)
Perceived Value	3	Reflective	Overall, shopping through this platform provides good value.	Abbas et al. (2025)
eWOM Adoption	3	Reflective	I rely on online reviews when making purchase decisions.	Abbas et al. (2025)
Purchase Intention	4	Reflective	I intend to purchase products through this platform.	Blanco-Encomienda & Rosillo-Díaz (2025)

Note: All construct items will be measured using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7. Gender will be measured as a binary categorical demographic variable and will be used as the grouping variable for the subsequent multigroup analysis rather than being modelled as a latent construct.

Pilot Study

Before formal data collection, a pilot study will be conducted with respondents who satisfy the eligibility criteria of the target population, and the pilot test will evaluate questionnaire clarity, item wording, sequence, completion time, and preliminary internal consistency. Respondent feedback will be used to identify ambiguous or repetitive items and to make minor wording refinements where necessary, and preliminary reliability will be assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with values of 0.70 or above considered acceptable. The pilot study will serve to improve measurement quality rather than to test the proposed structural hypotheses.

Data Collection Procedure

Data will be collected through an online self-administered questionnaire distributed to eligible Malaysian Generation Y consumers with relevant skincare content-commerce experience, and prior to participation, respondents will receive information regarding the research purpose, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality arrangements, and their right to discontinue participation.

Screening questions will be presented at the beginning of the questionnaire to ensure compliance with the predefined eligibility criteria, and following data collection, responses will be screened for incompleteness, implausibly short completion times, straight-lining patterns, and internal inconsistencies. Responses that fail to satisfy the screening or data-quality criteria will be excluded from subsequent analysis.

No unnecessary personally identifying information will be collected, and all responses will be analysed in aggregate form.

Common Method Bias

Because the predictor and criterion constructs will be measured using a single self-administered questionnaire, procedural remedies will be implemented to reduce the potential for common method bias; these remedies will include respondent anonymity, clear and neutral item wording, reduced evaluation apprehension, and conceptual separation among the principal constructs.

Following data collection, Harman's single-factor test will be used as a supplementary diagnostic, interpreted in conjunction with the overall measurement-model diagnostics.

Data Analysis

The proposed empirical analysis will be conducted in two stages. First, SPSS will be used for preliminary data screening, descriptive analysis, assessment of missing values, respondent characteristics, and potential data-quality issues.

Second, SmartPLS 4 will be used to estimate the proposed model using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM is appropriate because the study is prediction oriented, includes multiple latent constructs and indirect relationships, and requires simultaneous assessment of measurement and structural models, and the analysis will follow the recommendations of Hair et al. (2019, 2022), proceeding sequentially from measurement-model assessment to structural-model evaluation.

Measurement Model Assessment

The reflective measurement model will be evaluated in terms of indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, and indicator reliability will be assessed using outer loadings, with values of approximately 0.708 or above regarded as satisfactory.

Internal consistency reliability will be evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability (CR), with values between 0.70 and 0.95 regarded as satisfactory, while convergent validity will be assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with values of 0.50 or higher considered acceptable. Discriminant validity will primarily be evaluated using the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT), with values below 0.85 or 0.90, depending on

conceptual similarity, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values will additionally be examined where appropriate (Hair et al., 2022).

Structural Model Assessment

Following confirmation of satisfactory measurement quality, the structural model will be evaluated by examining collinearity, standardised path coefficients, explanatory power (R^2 and adjusted R^2), effect sizes (f^2), mediation, and predictive performance. Inner VIF values will first be assessed to identify potential collinearity among predictor constructs, and significance will be assessed through bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples.

The indirect effects of Trust and Perceived Value on Purchase Intention through eWOM Adoption will be evaluated using bootstrapped confidence intervals, and PLSpredict will be used to evaluate the model's out-of-sample predictive performance. These procedures follow contemporary recommendations for PLS-SEM assessment in management research (Hair et al., 2019, 2022).

Gender Multigroup Analysis

Gender will be incorporated as a categorical boundary condition rather than as a latent construct. Accordingly, Gender will be used as the grouping variable. The question is whether the relationship between eWOM Adoption and Purchase Intention differs significantly between male and female consumers. This minimum group size is consistent with the recommendation of at least 100 observations per group to obtain stable PLS-MGA estimates (Hair et al., 2022).

Before group comparison, measurement invariance will be assessed using the Measurement Invariance of Composite Models (MICOM) procedure (Henseler et al., 2016). MICOM comprises three sequential stages—configural invariance, compositional invariance, and equality of composite means and variances—and establishing at least partial measurement invariance will provide the basis for meaningful comparison of the structural relationship across gender groups.

Following the MICOM assessment, PLS Multigroup Analysis (PLS-MGA) will be used to compare the path coefficient from eWOM Adoption to Purchase Intention between male and female consumers, and a statistically significant difference between the group-specific path coefficients will provide support for H10.

Conclusion

This study develops an integrated conceptual framework. Its purpose is to explain Purchase Intention in contemporary content-commerce environments. Drawing primarily on the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework and the Information Adoption Model, the proposed model conceptualises Information Quality, Service Quality, Convenience, Information Quantity, and Perceived Ease of Use as platform-related stimuli; Trust and Perceived Value as parallel psychological evaluations; eWOM Adoption as the information-processing mechanism; and Purchase Intention as the behavioural response. Gender is further positioned as a boundary condition in the relationship between eWOM Adoption and Purchase Intention.

The proposed framework contributes to the existing literature in several ways. First, it moves beyond fragmented approaches that examine platform characteristics independently by integrating informational, service-related, process-related, and technological stimuli within a common theoretical architecture. Second, it distinguishes conceptually related but theoretically different constructs, particularly Information Quality and Information Quantity, Convenience and Perceived Ease of Use, Trust and Perceived Value, and eWOM exposure and eWOM Adoption. Third, the framework clarifies the complementary roles of the theories employed. S–O–R provides the overarching behavioural structure, IAM explains the information-adoption mechanism, while the Information Systems Success perspective and TAM provide construct-level grounding for selected platform characteristics.

Methodologically, the study proposes a positivist, deductive, quantitative, and cross-sectional research design. Non-probability purposive sampling will be employed to recruit Malaysian Generation Y consumers who possess relevant skincare content-commerce experience. An a priori G*Power analysis indicates a minimum required sample of 138 respondents based on five predictors, a medium effect size of $f^2 = 0.15$, $\alpha = 0.05$, and statistical power of 0.95. Subsequent empirical validation will employ PLS-SEM in SmartPLS 4 to assess measurement reliability and validity, structural relationships, mediation effects, predictive performance, and the proposed Gender boundary condition.

Practically, the framework suggests that platform managers should recognise that increasing content volume or technological usability alone may not automatically increase Purchase Intention; instead, platform characteristics should collectively strengthen consumer Trust and Perceived Value and facilitate the adoption of relevant electronic information.

At the national level, the framework is relevant to the development of Malaysia's digital-commerce ecosystem, which requires reliable platform services, information integrity, consumer trust, and consumer-oriented transaction environments.

Limitations and Future Research

As a conceptual and proposed empirical framework, the study does not claim to provide final causal evidence regarding the hypothesised relationships. Future empirical research should therefore validate the proposed relationships using adequately powered samples and appropriate structural modelling techniques, and should also examine whether the framework remains robust across different generations, product categories, national settings, and content-commerce platforms.

Declarations

Declaration of competing interests: The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Declaration of data availability: This is a theoretical/conceptual paper. No new empirical data were collected or analysed. All sources analysed are publicly available and properly cited.

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from the authors' institutional review board prior to the empirical data collection described in Section 3.

CRedit authorship contribution:

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