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## BEAUTY IN THE DIGITAL AGE: WHAT INFLUENCES WOMEN TO BUY SKINCARE ONLINE?

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### Abstract:

As e-commerce continues to grow, understanding consumer behavior in the online skincare market becomes increasingly important. This research examines the key factors influencing women's intention to purchase skincare products online. It examines the relationship between Product Price (PP), Brand Trust (BT), Perceived Usefulness (PU), Review Credibility (RC), and word of mouth (WOM) with purchase intention among women. Using a quantitative approach, this study aims to gather and analyze data from Malaysian women to assess the impact of these factors on their intention to purchase skincare products online. Data is collected through a questionnaire distributed via email, with a sample size of 395 respondents. The study utilizes reliability analysis, multiple regression analysis, and Pearson's correlation analysis for data analysis. Evidence from the study shows that brand trust and word-of-mouth significantly impact purchase intention, whereas product price, perceived usefulness, and review credibility show no significant effect. The study intends to explore consumer behavior trends among female shoppers in Malaysia's digital skincare industry, in particular the online skincare market among women. These insights could inform e-commerce strategies for skincare companies and help businesses enhance brand credibility and leverage word-of-mouth marketing. It will ultimately contribute to the development and improvement of the online skincare retail sector in Malaysia.

### Keywords:

Online Purchase Intention; Skincare Products; E-Commerce; Consumer Behavior

## Introduction

As e-commerce continues to expand, online skincare shopping is becoming increasingly popular among Malaysian women. The rise of online commerce in Malaysia has altered consumer shopping behavior, particularly in the skincare industry, where digital platforms offer accessibility, variety, and personalized recommendations (Asuhaimi et al., 2019). With 98% internet penetration and a smartphone penetration rate of 89%, Malaysia's e-commerce sector continues to expand, making online shopping a dominant trend (Kashyap, 2024). Online shopping offers numerous benefits, including convenience and cost-effectiveness (Larano et al., 2023). However, concerns over product authenticity, misleading advertisements, and brand trust still influence purchasing decisions (Ansari, 2019).

Skincare products are essential for maintaining healthy skin, addressing skin concerns, and enhancing self-confidence. Women's skin is more sensitive due to hormonal changes, making proper skincare crucial (Sahawneh, 2024). The hot and humid climate in Malaysia further affects skin conditions, leading to an increased demand for effective skincare solutions (Mawazi, 2022). The main issue is the lack of strict regulation to control what is sold online, permitting counterfeit or hazardous products to enter the market. Many consumers unknowingly purchase non-certified and potentially harmful skincare products online, which may contain toxic ingredients such as hydroquinone, mercury, and retinoids (Wan Mohamed Radzi & Nordin, 2022).

Customers also encounter difficulties in verifying the authenticity of online reviews and influencer recommendations, as some are either fraudulent or paid endorsements. In addition, the inability to test products prior to purchase, ambiguous return policies, and unknown sellers contribute to consumers' feelings of uncertainty. These challenges highlight the importance of understanding the factors that influence women's online skincare purchases and how they evaluate product information in today's digital landscape.

To better understand these behavioral drivers, this study employs the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which explain how product price, brand trust, perceived usefulness, review credibility, and word of mouth shape consumer purchase behavior. Gaining insight into these factors is crucial for building consumer trust, improving regulatory oversight, and refining digital marketing strategies, ultimately fostering a safer and more transparent online skincare shopping environment (Rahmi et al., 2022).

## Research Objective

This research aims to examine the influence of Product Price (PP), Brand Trust (BT), Perceived Usefulness (PU), Review Credibility (RC), and word of mouth (WOM) on online skincare purchase intention among women in Malaysia.

## Literature Review

While TPB and TAM are widely used in consumer behavior research, alternative models such as UTAUT provide additional perspectives. However, TPB and TAM are selected due to their strong empirical support in online purchasing studies. The study adopts a dual-theoretical approach, merging the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to examine the impact of product price, brand trust, perceived usefulness, review credibility, and word of mouth on purchase intention among Malaysian women purchasing skincare products online.

Under TPB, product price, brand trust, review credibility, and word-of-mouth influence consumer attitudes toward online purchases, shaping their purchase intentions (Yang et al., 2024). Product price influences perceived value and affordability, while brand trust mitigates uncertainty and fosters confidence in online skincare shopping (Dam, 2020). Review credibility affects consumer decision-making by enhancing trust in product authenticity and quality, whereas word-of-mouth recommendations provide social validation, reinforcing purchase confidence (Soelasih & Sumani, 2021).

TAM is incorporated to explain how perceived usefulness influences purchase intention in e-commerce. Consumers tend to adopt online skincare shopping when they perceive digital platforms as useful, easy to navigate, and capable of providing relevant product information (Gupta et al., 2022). Perceived usefulness, therefore, significantly influences consumers' intention to purchase online as it enhances their confidence in product effectiveness and convenience (Jumaah et al., 2022). This study explores the core determinants influencing online skincare purchases among Malaysian women. Understanding these relationships can help businesses refine digital marketing strategies, build consumer trust, and enhance user experiences, ensuring a safer and more reliable e-commerce environment for skincare consumers.

### ***Product Price (PP) and Online Purchase Intention for Skincare Products***

Product price contributes substantially to shaping the purchase intention of women in online shopping. As an extrinsic value, price influences consumer perceptions regarding both product quality and affordability (Santo & Marques, 2022). Consumers tend to seek competitive pricing and value for money, which affects their decision-making process, particularly in e-commerce (Mokhtar et al., 2020). Additionally, price perception influences perceived behavioral control, as consumers with limited income feel constrained by higher prices (Hampson et al., 2021). Empirical evidence suggests that pricing strategies, including discounts and promotions, significantly impact purchase intention (Berlilana et al., 2024). However, price does not always lead to a positive purchasing response, as some consumers equate lower prices with diminished quality (Lee et al., 2017).

Despite conflicting perspectives, pricing remains a crucial factor in influencing purchase behaviors, driving consumer engagement, and shaping competitive e-commerce strategies (Maia et al., 2019; Azizah & Prasetya, 2023). While price sensitivity is a common determinant of purchase intention, studies suggest that for high-involvement products like skincare, brand trust and product efficacy may outweigh pricing concerns (Choi & Lee, 2019). The corresponding hypothesis is articulated as follows:

*H1: There is a positive relationship between product price and purchase intention for skincare products among women.*

### ***Brand Trust (BT) and Online Purchase Intention for Skincare Products***

Women's intention to purchase is strongly influenced by brand trust, which signifies their belief in the brand's reliability and integrity (Sanny et al., 2020; Armawan et al., 2023). Trust is established through consistent brand experiences, transparency, and positive word-of-mouth, leading to stronger consumer-brand relationships (Hanaysha, 2022). When a brand is perceived as trustworthy, consumers are more inclined to form purchase intentions, as trust reduces perceived risk and boosts confidence in the product's quality (Dam, 2020). When consumers

believe that a brand consistently delivers on its promises, they develop favorable attitudes toward purchasing, reinforcing their decision-making process (Bernarto et al., 2020). Additionally, social influence and external validation from trusted sources, such as influencers and brand advocates, further enhance consumer confidence, aligning with TPB's concept of subjective norms (Hanaysha, 2022).

Research has shown that high brand trust leads to greater customer commitment, loyalty, and positive brand referrals, ultimately strengthening long-term consumer relationships and repeat purchases (Ali et al., 2018; Chae et al., 2020). However, brand trust can also be negatively impacted by inconsistent brand communication, misleading advertisements, or crisis-related policy changes, which can erode consumer confidence and lower purchase intentions (Leung & Seah, 2022; Bigné et al., 2023). Thus, businesses must prioritize transparency, customer engagement, and credibility-building strategies to maintain trust and sustain consumer purchase intentions in the competitive online skincare market. The following hypothesis is therefore proposed in this study:

*H2: There is a positive relationship between brand trust and purchase intention for skincare products among women*

#### ***Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Online Purchase Intention for Skincare Products***

The belief that a digital platform makes shopping more effective and convenient is referred to as perceived usefulness, and it plays a crucial role in consumers' adoption and engagement with online shopping (Yu et al., 2024). Perceived usefulness significantly impacts purchase intention among women by shaping their confidence in online shopping platforms and influencing their decision-making process (Sahai et al., 2024). Consumers are more inclined to embrace online shopping if they find it useful, as it enhances efficiency and convenience (Zhao et al., 2024).

Consumers tend to favor platforms that offer detailed product information, ease of navigation, and efficient transactions, reinforcing their likelihood of making purchases (Hoang et al., 2023). Research suggests that a positive perception of usefulness enhances trust, making consumers more inclined to engage in e-commerce transactions (ElSayad, 2024). On the other hand, if online shopping feels inconvenient or unhelpful, people may be reluctant to switch from offline to online shopping, showing the importance of perceived usefulness in e-commerce (Ithnin et al., 2022). Therefore, businesses must emphasize user-friendly features, reliability, and informative content to increase perceived usefulness and positively influence purchase intention in online skincare shopping. Based on this, the following hypothesis is established:

*H3: There is a positive relationship between perceived usefulness and purchase intention for skincare products among women.*

#### ***Review Credibility (RC) and Online Purchase Intention for Skincare Products***

Review credibility significantly impacts purchase intention among women by influencing their attitudes toward online purchases (Macheka et al., 2024). Consumers tend to place greater confidence in product reviews when they regard them as accurate, consistent, and written by credible sources (Chen et al., 2021; Majali et al., 2022). Credible reviews reduce uncertainty, enhance trust, and positively influence consumer attitudes, thereby increasing the likelihood of

a purchase (Andoy et al., 2022; Lam et al., 2025). Attitude strongly influences behavior, so trusting reviews increases purchase intentions (Suganya & Asan Bawa, 2024).

Studies have shown that expert opinions, verified purchase reviews, and influencer credibility all contribute to the perceived trustworthiness of reviews, thereby reinforcing consumer confidence in product quality (Daowd et al., 2020; Prasetyo et al., 2024). However, conflicting findings suggest that inconsistent or biased reviews may reduce credibility, making consumers hesitant to rely on online feedback (Zaman et al., 2023). Therefore, businesses must ensure authenticity and transparency in customer reviews to maintain credibility, enhance consumer perceptions, and increase their likelihood of making a purchase. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is suggested:

*H4: There is a positive relationship between review credibility and purchase intention for skincare products among women in Malaysia.*

#### ***Word-of-Mouth (WOM) and Online Purchase Intention for Skincare Products***

Word-of-mouth (WOM) is a key factor influencing purchase intention among women, as it significantly influences consumer attitudes toward products and services. WOM is regarded as a trustworthy and influential reference point, as it enhances trust, reduces uncertainty, and impacts consumer perceptions (Boonsiritomachai & Sud-On, 2020). Positive WOM strengthens brand image and credibility, leading to higher purchase intentions, whereas negative WOM can deter consumers from making a purchase (Soelasih & Sumani, 2021). Attitudes are formed based on external influences, such as word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations, which shape consumer decision-making (Apdillah et al., 2022).

Research indicates that both traditional and electronic WOM (eWOM) significantly influence consumer purchasing behavior, with eWOM leveraging online reviews, testimonials, and influencer endorsements to further impact buying behavior (Kamalasena & Sirisena, 2021). Consumers rely on trusted sources, including friends, family, and online communities, to validate product quality and service reliability, reinforcing the strong relationship between WOM and purchase intention (First et al., 2023). Businesses should focus on encouraging positive WOM through excellent customer experiences, authentic marketing strategies, and transparent brand communications to enhance consumer confidence and increase the likelihood of purchase. This study puts forth the following hypothesis:

*H5: There is a positive relationship between word-of-mouth and purchase intention for skincare products among women in Malaysia.*

To provide a more comprehensive summary of the existing research, Table 1 summarises main previous findings on factors influencing online purchase intention.

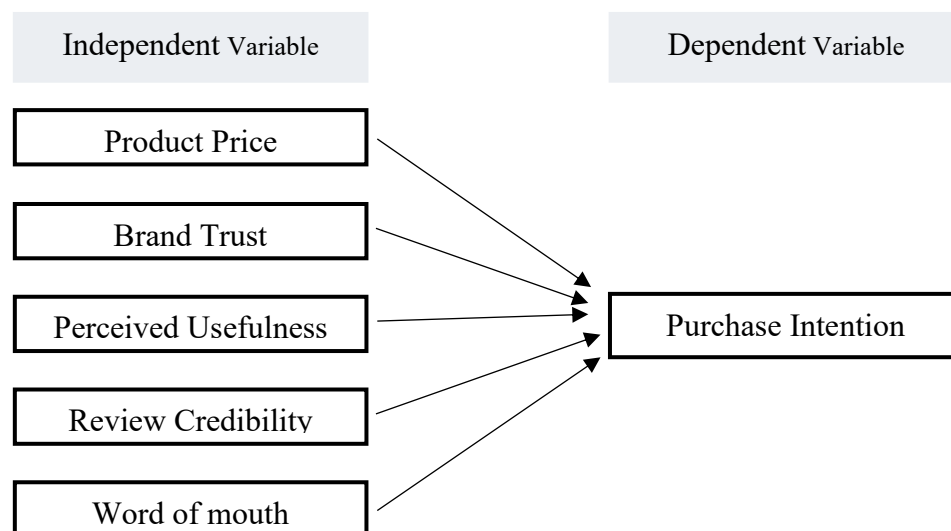


**Table 1: Summary of Past Research on Factors Affecting Online Purchase Intention**

| Authors                 | Focus Area  | Key Findings  |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Berlilana et al. (2024) | Analysing the impact of discount strategies   | Discount percentage and product category were significant predictors of consumer ratings.   |
| Dam (2020)              | Examining how brand trust and perceived value influence brand preference and purchase intention                         | Brand trust positively influences brand preference.<br>Brand trust positively affects purchase intention.   |
| Daowd et al. (2021)     | Impact of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on purchase intention among Generation Y                                      | Source style as a visual attribute of information is the most significant factor that may impact eWOM credibility, in addition to source credibility, argument quality, and source homophily  |
| Kang et al. (2024)      | Identifying the key factors influencing the purchase intention of skincare products among Malaysian consumers           | Product price, brand reputation, attitude, and subjective norms significantly affect consumers' purchase intentions.  |
| Le-Hoang (2020).        | Factors influencing consumers' online shopping intentions on the Lazada e-commerce platform                             | Six factors that positively influence online purchase intention: usefulness-convenience, trust, behavioral control awareness, business competency, and reference group opinion  |
| Santo & Marques (2022)  | Factors influencing online purchase intention   | The intention to continue purchasing in online shops is partly explained by access to information online, hedonic motivations, and trust in e-commerce sites. Online information generates trust, and the perception of online prices does not influence loyalty but has a positive influence on hedonic motivations. |
| Sanny et al., (2020).   | How brand image and brand trust influence consumer purchase intention in the skincare segment of the cosmetics industry | Social media marketing had a significant impact on brand image and brand trust. Brand trust and brand image had significant impacts on purchase intention.  |
| Zurin & Tugiman (2022)  | How social media influencers affect consumers' purchase intention   | Credibility, trustworthiness, and attractiveness have a statistically significant effect on consumers' purchase intentions.   |

## Research Framework

Figure 1 portrays the research framework based on the hypothesized relationships.



**Figure 1. Research Framework**

## Research Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research methodology to investigate the relationship between five independent variables—product price, brand trust, perceived usefulness, review credibility, and word-of-mouth—and Malaysian women's purchase intention for skincare products online. The main method of data gathering was a structured questionnaire, as it allows for standardized responses, efficient data analysis, and broad coverage (Taherdoost, 2021). Data collection took place for two months from November to December 2024. The study was conducted online, with the survey distributed through social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, targeting users based in Malaysia.

The target population consisted of Malaysian women aged 18 to 55, encompassing a diverse range of life stages and skincare needs. A purposive non-probability sampling approach was chosen, which is widely used in studies aiming to gain insights into specific consumer behaviors (Sharma, 2017). Purposive sampling was chosen due to its ability to target active online skincare shoppers, ensuring relevant responses. While this method limits generalizability, it allows for a focused analysis of the target demographic.

Based on a G\*Power analysis, a minimum of 92 participants was needed to ensure statistical validity. However, 395 valid responses were collected, ensuring a robust dataset. Data was collected via Microsoft Forms, allowing accessibility and convenience for respondents. Participants were required to provide written informed consent at the start of the survey, confirming their voluntary participation before they could access the survey section.

Various statistical software programs, such as SPSS, Stata, and SAS, provide comprehensive tools for conducting computerized statistical analysis. IBM's SPSS software was used in this study to conduct descriptive and inferential analyses, including reliability and correlation tests

as well as multiple regression, for hypothesis validation. The methodology was designed to ensure valid, reliable, and generalizable findings relevant to e-commerce and online consumer behavior (Haque et al., 2018). Table 2 displays the results.

**Table 2: Instrument Design and Reliability Analysis**

| Variables               | Adapted<br>Items | Sources  | Cronbach's<br>Alpha | Sample(n) |
|-------------------------|------------------|--|---------------------|-----------|
| Product Price           | 5                | (Mokthar et al., 2020)<br>(Mbete & Tanamal, 2020)<br>(Dam, 2020)               | 0.798               | 395       |
| Brand Trust             | 5                | (Kamalasena & Sirisena, 2021)<br>(Kwek et al., 2010)                           | 0.847               |           |
| Perceived<br>Usefulness | 5                | Athapaththu &<br>Kulathunga, 2018)<br>(Hasan et al., 2015)<br>(Le-Hoang, 2020) | 0.875               |           |
| Review Credibility      | 5                | (Andoy et al., 2022)<br>(Chakraborty, 2019)                                    | 0.888               |           |
| Word of Mouth           | 4                | (Anusha et al., 2020)<br>(Tien et al., 2019)                                   | 0.703               |           |
| Purchase Intention      | 6                | (Emini, A. (2021)<br>(Chrisniyanti & Fah<br>(2022).                            | 0.842               |           |

## Results

The demographic information of 395 respondents underwent descriptive analysis, which confirmed adherence to the inclusion criteria. Table 3 presents a summary of the respondents' demographic profiles.

**Table 3: Respondent Demographic Profile**

| Items                       |                    | Frequency | %    | Sample (n) |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|-----------|------|------------|
| <b>Race</b>                 | Malay              | 132       | 33.4 | 395        |
|                             | Chinese            | 137       | 34.7 |            |
|                             | Indian             | 126       | 31.9 |            |
| <b>Age</b>                  | 18 – 24            | 113       | 28.6 |            |
|                             | 25 – 34            | 105       | 26.6 |            |
|                             | 35 – 44            | 97        | 24.6 |            |
|                             | 45 – 55            | 80        | 20.3 |            |
| <b>Monthly Salary Range</b> | Less than RM 2,000 | 99        | 25.1 |            |



|  |  |     |      |
|--|--|-----|------|
|  | Between RM 2,001 and RM 4,000          | 102 | 25.8 |
|  | From RM 4,001 to RM 6,000              | 135 | 34.2 |
|  | More than RM 6,000                     | 59  | 14.9 |
| <b>Education Level</b>                                     | Secondary School                       | 61  | 15.4 |
|  | Diploma                                | 77  | 19.5 |
|  | Undergraduate                          | 214 | 54.2 |
|  | Postgraduate                           | 43  | 10.9 |
| <b>How often do you purchase skincare products online?</b> | Rarely (less than monthly)             | 83  | 21.0 |
|  | Monthly                                | 148 | 37.5 |
|  | A few times per month                  | 109 | 27.6 |
|  | Frequently (more than 3 times monthly) | 55  | 13.9 |

Next, the descriptive statistics and intention to purchase skincare products online among Malaysian women are shown in Table 4, which also reports Cronbach's alpha values for the primary dataset.

**Table 4: Descriptive and Reliability Analysis**

| Variables                    | Mean   | Standard Deviation | Cronbach's Alpha | Sample (n) |
|------------------------------|--------|--------------------|------------------|------------|
| Product Price (AVGPP)        | 1.6724 | 0.51092            | 0.798            | 395        |
| Brand Trust (AVGBT)          | 1.5554 | 0.49836            | 0.847            |            |
| Perceived Usefulness (AVGPU) | 1.5853 | 0.49657            | 0.875            |            |
| Review Credibility (AVGRC)   | 1.6162 | 0.45256            | 0.888            |            |
| Word of Mouth (AVGWOM)       | 1.5525 | 0.47420            | 0.703            |            |
| Purchase Intention (AVGPI)   | 1.2781 | 0.44108            | 0.842            |            |

According to the retrieval results in Table 5, significant interactions between the constructs were prevalent. Positive correlations were found between the independent variables (PP, BT, PU, RC, WOM) and the dependent variable (PurInt), which supports the use of a combined TAM and TPB (Ajzen, 2020) model in this study.

**Table 5: Correlation Analysis**

|        | PP      | BT      | PU      | RC      | WOM     | PurInt  |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| PP     | 1       | 0.542** | 0.498** | 0.259** | 0.319** | 0.278** |
|        | -       | <0.001  | <0.001  | <0.001  | <0.001  | <0.001  |
|        | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     |
| BT     | 0.542** | 1       | 0.627** | 0.397** | 0.469** | 0.348** |
|        | <0.001  | -       | <0.001  | <0.001  | <0.001  | <0.001  |
|        | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     |
| PU     | 0.498** | 0.627** | 1       | 0.579** | 0.414** | 0.238** |
|        | <0.001  | <0.001  | -       | <0.001  | <0.001  | <0.001  |
|        | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     |
| RC     | 0.259** | 0.397** | 0.579** | 1       | 0.351** | 0.085   |
|        | <0.001  | <0.001  | <0.001  | -       | <0.001  | 0.092   |
|        | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     |
| WOM    | 0.319** | 0.469** | 0.414** | 0.351** | 1       | 0.432** |
|        | <0.001  | <0.001  | <0.001  | <0.001  | -       | <0.001  |
|        | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     |
| PurInt | 0.278** | 0.348** | 0.238** | 0.085   | 0.432** | 1       |
|        | <0.001  | <0.001  | <0.001  | 0.092   | <0.001  | -       |
|        | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     | 395     |

Table 6 presents the model summary for a regression analysis. The R-value of 0.485 indicates a moderate positive correlation. The model explains 23.6% of the variance in the dependent variable, as reflected by the R-squared statistic, while the adjusted R-squared (0.226) adjusts this figure to account for the number of predictors. The reported standard error of the estimate (0.38808) reflects the typical difference between actual and predicted values. Additionally, the Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.202 points to possible positive autocorrelation in the residuals, indicating the need for further investigation.

**Table 6: Multiple Regression Analysis**

| Model | R     | R Square | Adjusted Square | R | Std. Error of the Estimate | Durbin-Watson |
|-------|-------|----------|-----------------|---|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1     | 0.485 | 0.236    | 0.226           |   | 0.38808                    | 1.202         |

a. Predictors: (Constant), WOM, PP, RC, BT, PU  
b. Dependent Variable: PurInt

Table 7 evaluates the overall significance of the regression model. The regression model explains a total of 18.068 of the variances (sum of squares) in the dependent variable, with 5 degrees of freedom (df). The residual variance, which is unexplained, accounts for 58.587 (sum of squares) with 389 degrees of freedom. The F-statistic of 23.993 and a significance level (Sig.) of 0.000 indicate that the model is statistically significant, meaning the independent variables collectively have a meaningful impact on the dependent variable.

**Table 7: ANOVA and F-Test**

| Model             | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F      | Sig.  |
|-------------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|-------|
| <b>Regression</b> | 18.068         | 5   | 3.614       | 23.993 | 0.000 |
| <b>Residual</b>   | 58.587         | 389 | 0.151       |        |       |
| <b>Total</b>      | 76.654         | 294 |             |        |       |

a. Predictors: (Constant), WOM, PP, RC, BT, PU

b. Dependent Variable: PurInt

Then, the regression analysis shows that Review Credibility (RC) has a significant negative impact on purchase intention ( $B = -0.141$ ,  $\text{Beta} = -0.145$ ,  $t = -2.628$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ), indicating that higher perceived review credibility unexpectedly reduces the likelihood of purchasing skincare products. A possible explanation is that overly detailed or critical reviews may increase consumer skepticism, while excessively positive reviews might appear inauthentic. It can be inferred from the results that only Brand Trust and Word of Mouth, as independent variables, demonstrate a significant impact on Purchase Intention as a dependent variable. As indicated in Table 9, the hypotheses concerning these variables are confirmed.

**Table 8: Coefficients**

| Predictor       | Unstandardize<br>d (B) | Std. Error | Standardized<br>Coefficients (Beta) | t      | Sig.<br>(p-value) |
|-----------------|------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|--------|-------------------|
| <b>Constant</b> | 0.581                  | 0.092      | -                                   | 6.289  | 0.000             |
| <b>PP</b>       | 0.086                  | 0.047      | 0.099                               | 1.815  | 0.070             |
| <b>BT</b>       | 0.153                  | 0.056      | 0.172                               | 2.748  | 0.006             |
| <b>PU</b>       | 0.012                  | 0.059      | 0.014                               | 0.205  | 0.838             |
| <b>RC</b>       | -0.141                 | 0.054      | -0.145                              | -2.628 | 0.009             |
| <b>WOM</b>      | 0.339                  | 0.048      | 0.364                               | 7.069  | 0.000             |

Table 9 presents the outcomes of the hypothesis testing, revealing that three of the independent variables exhibit a statistically significant association with the dependent variable, as indicated by p-values below 0.05. These variables include Brand Trust ( $<0.001$ ), Review Credibility ( $<0.001$ ), and Word of Mouth ( $<0.001$ ). P-values below the 0.05 threshold imply, with 95% certainty, that a linear relationship exists between the independent and dependent variables. On the other hand, the p-values for Product Price (0.070) and Perceived Usefulness (0.838) exceed the 0.05 threshold, indicating that these two independent variables lack evidence of a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable.

**Table 9: Hypothesis Testing**

| No        | Predictor Variable  | Sig. (p-value) | Standardized Coefficients (Beta) | Decision      |
|-----------|---|----------------|----------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>H1</b> | There is a positive relationship between product price and purchase intention on skincare products among women in Malaysia. | 0.070          | 0.099                            | Not Supported |

|           |  |       |        |               |
|-----------|--|-------|--------|---------------|
| <b>H2</b> | There is a positive relationship between brand trust and purchase intention on skincare products among women in Malaysia.          | 0.006 | 0.172  | Supported     |
| <b>H3</b> | There is a positive relationship between perceived usefulness and purchase intention on skincare products among women in Malaysia. | 0.838 | 0.014  | Not Supported |
| <b>H4</b> | There is a positive relationship between review credibility and purchase intention on skincare products among women in Malaysia.   | 0.009 | -0.145 | Not Supported |
| <b>H5</b> | There is a positive relationship between word of mouth and purchase intention on skincare products among women in Malaysia.        | 0.000 | 0.364  | Supported     |

## Discussion

H1, which proposed a positive relationship between product price and purchase intention, was rejected as the price did not show statistical significance ( $p > 0.05$ ). This contradicts Mokhtar et al. (2020), who assert that competitive pricing is a crucial factor in online purchase decisions. However, Kang et al. (2024) and Chuah et al. (2023) argue that price sensitivity is reduced for skincare products as consumers prioritize quality and efficacy over affordability. George et al. (2024) investigated how perceived risk and price sensitivity moderated the link between perceived attitude and purchase intention for skincare products. The study found that neither perceived risk nor price sensitivity had a significant influence on this relationship. These findings suggest that price strategies alone may not be a strong determinant of purchase intention in the Malaysian skincare market, emphasizing the need for quality-driven marketing approaches.

H2, which examined the relationship between brand trust and purchase intention, was supported ( $p < 0.001$ ), aligning with Cherdsri et al. (2024), who emphasize that trust significantly affects purchasing intentions. Mafruchah and Hartono (2023), in their research, explore factors driving online purchase intention for Skintific skincare products on social commerce platforms and also discuss the role of online trust. Results indicate that transaction safety, online trust, and consumer engagement are significant predictors of online purchase intention. The importance of brand trust has also been confirmed in the research done by Adnan et al. (2023), which stated that brand awareness and reputation as mediators have affected influencer marketing on consumer purchase intention. However, Huiser Mangalindung and Hendayana (2024) argue that trust alone is insufficient when competitors offer better value or innovation. This suggests that while brand trust is a key driver, companies must complement it with continuous product development and transparent communication to maintain consumer confidence.

H3, which hypothesized a positive relationship between perceived usefulness and purchase intention, was rejected ( $p = 0.838$ ). This contradicts the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Venkatesh and Davis (2000), which suggests that perceived usefulness significantly impacts adoption behavior. However, Mu and Zhang (2021) and Savastano (2024)

found that in mature digital markets, consumers take platform usability for granted, shifting focus to product attributes like quality and brand reputation. Alternatively, Lee et al. (2022) argue that in emerging markets, perceived usefulness remains relevant as digital literacy affects consumer confidence. This indicates that Malaysian consumers may no longer view usability as a competitive advantage, requiring businesses to focus on product differentiation rather than platform efficiency.

H4, which proposed a positive relationship between review credibility and purchase intention, was rejected as review credibility had a negative impact ( $\beta = -0.145$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This contradicts Andoy et al. (2022), who argue that credible reviews reduce uncertainty and enhance confidence. However, Al-Youzbaky & Hanna (2022) suggest that excessive reliance on reviews can lead to decision fatigue, while Paul and Nikolaev (2021) highlight that fake or biased reviews erode trust in online platforms. This suggests that consumers are becoming more skeptical of online reviews, reinforcing the need for businesses to ensure authenticity in their review systems through third-party verification and genuine customer testimonials.

H5, which proposed a positive relationship between WOM and purchase intention, was strongly supported ( $p < 0.001$ ), aligning with Soelasih and Sumani (2021), who highlight WOM's role in influencing purchase decisions due to its authenticity. Respondents preferred recommendations from trusted sources like family and friends over advertisements, echoing Aslam et al. (2023). However, Zurin and Tugiman (2022) caution that negative WOM can significantly deter purchases, underscoring the dual nature of WOM as both an opportunity and a risk. This suggests that businesses should actively monitor and manage consumer feedback while leveraging referral programs and influencer partnerships to amplify positive WOM.

## Conclusion

Overall, the research objectives have been achieved, as the study successfully examined the influence of all five proposed independent variables on online skincare purchase intention among Malaysian women. This study highlights brand trust and word-of-mouth as key drivers of online skincare purchases among Malaysian women. In contrast, product price, perceived usefulness, and review credibility showed no significant positive impact, indicating a shift away from price sensitivity and technical features toward trust and social influence.

This study contributes to the academic body of knowledge by investigating how five major factors, which are product pricing, brand trust, perceived usefulness, review credibility, and word-of-mouth, influence Malaysian women's online skincare purchase intentions. The findings provide updated empirical insights pertinent to consumer behaviour and digital marketing literature, particularly in the Malaysian environment.

For the skincare and e-commerce industries, the findings emphasize the need for businesses to focus on credibility and authentic customer engagement. Brand trust can be strengthened through transparent ingredient disclosures, product certifications, and strong customer service. Since WOM significantly influences purchase decisions, businesses should collaborate with trusted influencers, beauty bloggers, and satisfied customers to share authentic product experiences. Loyalty programs and referral incentives can further amplify positive WOM. Additionally, review credibility is crucial, but consumer skepticism toward online reviews is increasing. To address this, businesses should implement verified purchase reviews, actively respond to customer feedback, and take steps to prevent fake reviews. Using AI-driven review

authentication and engaging with genuine user-generated content can enhance credibility and foster consumer trust.

At the national level, the study highlights areas where consumer protection can be strengthened. Policymakers can strengthen consumer protection laws, regulate advertising, and enforce stricter product certification to ensure safer online skincare purchases. Fraudulent and non-certified skincare products pose health risks, so stricter registration and verification processes should be required before products are listed online. Regulating misleading skincare advertisements by mandating scientific evidence for product claims can prevent deceptive marketing. Furthermore, improving product certification transparency through public databases can help consumers verify the authenticity of products. Collaborating with e-commerce platforms to flag suspicious sellers using AI-driven monitoring systems will further enhance consumer protection and promote safer purchasing practices.

While the study provides valuable insights, it focused solely on Malaysian women, limiting its applicability to other demographics, such as men or individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Expanding future research to a broader population could provide more comprehensive insights. The use of self-reported data may have resulted in response biases, as participants might have tailored their answers to appear socially desirable. Moreover, some respondents may have misinterpreted questions, affecting data consistency. A cross-sectional design observes consumer behavior at a given time without tracking changes that may occur later. A longitudinal approach may be utilized in future studies to observe how consumer behavior trends develop over time. Furthermore, the integration of qualitative methodologies, such as interviews, could offer a more profound understanding of the decision-making process. Lastly, while the study examined five key factors, other influences, such as customer satisfaction and advertising effectiveness, were not considered, which could be explored in future research.

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