

DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES AND CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISION IN E-COMMERCE: THE ROLES OF TRUST AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTION

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Abstract: *The rapid growth of e-commerce has transformed the way businesses engage with consumers through digital marketing strategies such as mobile marketing and online advertising. Despite the increasing adoption of these strategies, their effectiveness in influencing actual consumer purchase decisions remains inconsistent, particularly in emerging digital markets where concerns regarding trust and transaction security continue to exist. This study examines the influence of digital marketing strategies on consumer purchase decision through the mediating roles of trust and behavioural intention among Malaysian e-commerce consumers. Guided by the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) theory, the study proposes that digital marketing strategies function as external stimuli that shape consumers’ internal psychological evaluations before influencing purchasing behaviour. A quantitative cross-sectional research design was employed, and data were collected from 210 Malaysian consumers with prior online purchasing experience using a structured online questionnaire. The data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS 4.0. The findings reveal that digital marketing strategies significantly influence trust and behavioural intention, while trust also positively affects behavioural intention. Behavioural intention was found to have the strongest direct effect on consumer*

purchase decision. In addition, mediation analysis confirmed that trust and behavioural intention significantly mediate the relationship between digital marketing strategies and purchase decision. The study contributes to the digital marketing and e-commerce literature by providing an integrated explanation of how digital marketing strategies translate into actual purchasing behaviour through sequential psychological mechanisms. The findings also offer practical implications for e-commerce firms and digital marketers in developing trust-oriented and consumer-centred digital marketing strategies to improve online purchase conversion in emerging digital markets.

Keywords: *Digital Marketing Strategies, Consumer Trust, Behavioral Intention, S–O–R theory,*

Introduction

The rapid expansion of e-commerce and the increasing integration of digital technologies into commercial activities have significantly altered the way firms communicate with consumers and influence purchasing behaviour. Within this environment, digital marketing strategies such as mobile marketing and online advertising are widely adopted to stimulate consumer engagement, generate brand awareness, and encourage purchase conversion (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Yadav & Rahman, 2018). Despite the widespread implementation of these strategies, their effectiveness in producing actual consumer purchase decisions remains inconclusive, as digital exposure alone does not necessarily lead to transactional outcomes. In highly competitive online marketplaces, consumers are often exposed to a large volume of promotional messages, yet many still hesitate to complete purchases due to uncertainty, credibility concerns, and lack of confidence in online transactions (Hajli et al., 2017).

Existing literature has established that consumer purchase decision in digital commerce is not solely determined by the frequency or attractiveness of marketing communication, but is also shaped by internal psychological evaluations that occur before the final transaction. Among these, trust and behavioural intention have been consistently identified as two influential determinants. Trust reduces consumers' perceived uncertainty regarding platform reliability, payment security, and information credibility (Gefen et al., 2003), while behavioural intention reflects the consumer's motivational readiness to proceed with a purchasing action and serves as a direct antecedent of actual behaviour as proposed by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). However, prior empirical studies have reported fragmented findings regarding the role of these constructs. Some studies suggest that digital marketing directly stimulates purchase behaviour through persuasive communication, whereas others indicate that the effect is indirect and highly dependent on consumers' trust formation and purchase intention (Alalwan, 2018; Kim & Peterson, 2017). This inconsistency indicates that the mechanism through which digital marketing strategies translate into actual purchase decisions is still not sufficiently explained.

Furthermore, previous studies tend to examine digital marketing strategies, trust, behavioural intention, and purchase decision in separate or partially connected models, with limited emphasis on testing their interdependent relationships within a unified framework. As a result, the sequential pathway explaining how digital marketing strategies cultivate trust, enhance behavioural intention, and subsequently lead to purchase decision remains underexplored. Such a gap is critical because studies in scholarly writing should not merely describe existing knowledge but must clearly demonstrate the unresolved relationship that justifies empirical

investigation. In addition, much of the empirical evidence on digital consumer behaviour has been generated from developed economies with mature digital infrastructures and relatively stable institutional trust, which may not be directly generalisable to emerging markets such as Malaysia where online purchasing confidence and digital payment acceptance continue to evolve (Salam et al., 2023).

Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by examining the influence of digital marketing strategies on consumer purchase decision through the mediating roles of trust and behavioural intention among Malaysian e-commerce consumers. By integrating these constructs into a single structural framework, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive explanation of the consumer decision-making process in digital commerce and to extend current understanding of how digital marketing strategies generate effective transactional outcomes in emerging digital markets.

Literature Review

Digital Marketing Strategies in E-Commerce

Digital marketing strategies have become integral to e-commerce performance as organisations increasingly rely on online advertising, mobile marketing, social media engagement, and personalized promotional communication to influence consumer behaviour. Existing literature generally supports the view that digital marketing enhances consumer awareness, facilitates customer-brand interaction, and stimulates purchase-related responses by delivering timely and relevant information (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Yadav and Rahman, 2018). Through algorithm-driven targeting and real-time communication, digital marketing allows firms to shape consumers' perceptions more effectively than conventional one-way promotional methods.

However, despite this generally positive perspective, the empirical evidence regarding the direct effectiveness of digital marketing on actual purchase decision remains inconclusive. Several studies suggest that intensive digital exposure increases customer engagement but does not always guarantee transaction completion due to banner fatigue, promotional scepticism, and consumer resistance toward repetitive online persuasion (Alalwan, 2018). Similarly, some consumers may respond favourably to digital content in terms of attention and platform browsing, yet still refrain from purchasing when concerns regarding credibility, security, or message authenticity arise. This suggests that digital marketing strategies may function more effectively as an external stimulus that initiates consumer cognitive processing rather than as a direct determinant of final purchase behaviour. Therefore, the relationship between digital marketing exposure and purchase decision appears to be psychologically mediated rather than purely linear.

Trust in Digital Commerce: Platform Trust, Payment Trust, and Marketing Communication Trust

Trust is widely recognised as one of the most critical determinants of online consumer behaviour because digital transactions inherently involve uncertainty, information asymmetry, and perceived risk. Nevertheless, trust in e-commerce is not a singular construct; rather, it operates across several interconnected dimensions that shape consumer confidence during the online purchase process. First, platform trust refers to consumers' confidence in the reliability, competence, and integrity of the e-commerce website or application itself. Consumers are more willing to transact when they perceive the platform as dependable, transparent, and capable of protecting personal information (Gefen et al., 2003). Second, digital payment trust concerns

consumers' belief that payment mechanisms are secure, error-free, and resistant to fraud or misuse. Payment security assurance is particularly important in online transactions because concerns over financial data exposure frequently interrupt the transition from browsing to purchasing. Third, marketing communication trust reflects the degree to which consumers perceive online advertisements, promotional messages, and product claims as honest, accurate, and non-manipulative. Even when platform systems are technologically sound, misleading promotions or exaggerated advertising messages can weaken consumer trust and reduce willingness to proceed with a purchase. Although prior studies acknowledge the importance of trust, much of the literature tends to focus on only one trust dimension—most commonly platform reliability or payment security—without examining trust as an integrated psychological assurance mechanism formed through simultaneous exposure to technological systems and digital marketing communication. This fragmented treatment creates conceptual ambiguity regarding which aspect of trust most strongly channels the effect of digital marketing strategies into behavioural responses. Consequently, there remains insufficient understanding of how trust collectively functions within the consumer decision-making pathway in e-commerce settings.

Behavioral Intention & Purchase Decision

Behavioral intention serves as a proximate predictor of actual consumer action, particularly in technology-mediated environments where direct observation of behavior can be constrained by situational factors. The extant literature consistently supports the premise that stronger behavioral intentions are associated with increased likelihood of purchase decisions, a relationship that is reinforced when contextualized within digital marketing and payment experiences. Lee and Park's (2023) longitudinal investigation revealed that consumers' intentions to purchase online are significantly influenced by their cumulative evaluations of digital marketing stimuli, trust in the platform, and past satisfaction with digital payments. Furthermore, behavioral intentions have been shown to mediate the influence of trust on actual purchasing behavior. For example, Zhao et al. (2024) reported that trust steadily enhances purchase intention across multiple e-commerce platforms, and this heightened intention, in turn, translates into observable purchase decisions with higher frequency and lower incidence of cart abandonment. Meanwhile, research by Hernandez and García (2025) emphasizes that contextual factors such as perceived value, convenience, and normative influences can further strengthen the behavioral intention towards purchase decision linkage, indicating that intention is not only a cognitive construct but also an experiential one shaped by consumers' evolving interactions with digital environments. Overall, the literature confirms that behavioral intention is a robust psychological precursor that reliably predicts purchase decisions in digital commerce, particularly when shaped by meaningful stimuli and trust-enhancing mechanisms.

SOR Theory in Digital Contexts

The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model provides a foundational framework for understanding how external environmental cues affect internal psychological evaluations and subsequent behavioral outcomes, a theoretical logic that has been widely applied in digital commerce research. In recent applications, scholars have employed the S–O–R framework to explain consumer responses to digital marketing, technological features, and interactive signals within online environments. For example, Zhang et al. (2023) used S–O–R to investigate how web-based stimuli such as personalized recommendations influenced users' emotional states and subsequent purchase intentions, concluding that organismic responses including cognitive evaluation and affective reactions fully mediate the effects of stimuli on consumer behavior. Extending this logic to mobile platforms, Nguyen and Tran (2024) demonstrated that S–O–R

elucidates the psychological pathways through which marketing cues and user interface design jointly impact user trust and engagement. Additionally, Bayraktar et al. (2025) incorporated trust and perceived ease of use as organismic constructs in an S–O–R model to predict continuance intention in mobile payment adoption, illustrating that stimuli related to system transparency and usability influence internal evaluations that drive user behavior. These studies affirm that the S–O–R paradigm remains a robust theoretical lens for interpreting digital consumer experiences, as it accommodates complex interactions between technological stimuli, individual psychological responses, and consequent behavioral outcomes. In the context of this research, the S–O–R model provides the structural logic linking digital marketing strategies to trust and behavioral intention, ultimately culminating in purchase decisions.

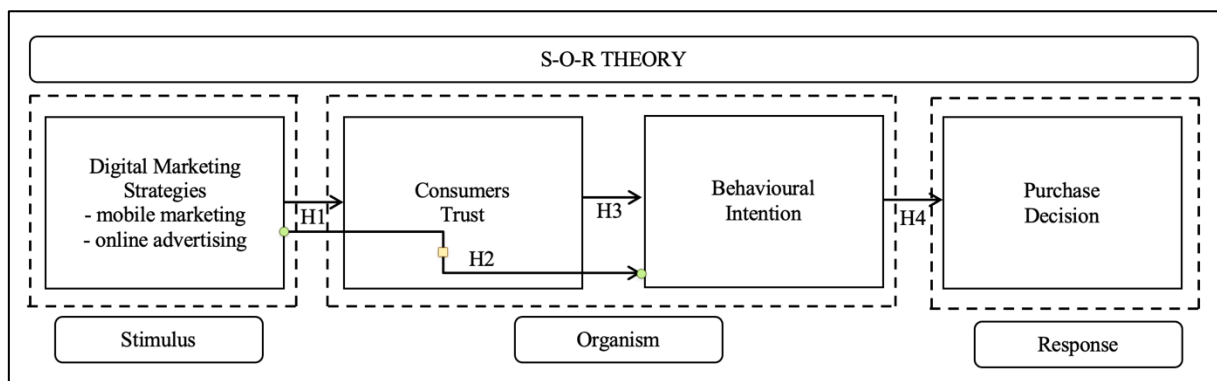


Figure 1: Research Framework

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the structural relationships between digital marketing strategies, consumer trust, behavioural intention, and purchase decision in the Malaysian e-commerce context. A quantitative approach was deemed appropriate because the study sought to empirically test hypothesised causal relationships among multiple latent constructs and to provide statistically generalisable insights into consumer behavioural patterns in digital commerce. Cross-sectional survey design is widely adopted in e-commerce and consumer behaviour studies due to its suitability in capturing respondents' perceptions, evaluations, and behavioural tendencies at a single point in time.

The target population comprised Malaysian consumers who had prior experience using e-commerce platforms and had been exposed to digital marketing activities, particularly mobile marketing and online advertising. To ensure respondent relevance, only individuals who had completed at least one online purchase within the previous six months were considered eligible to participate. Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire distributed via social media platforms, electronic messaging applications, and personal digital networks. Given the dispersed nature of the target population and the absence of a comprehensive sampling frame of Malaysian online consumers, this study employed a non-probability snowball sampling technique, whereby initial respondents were encouraged to forward the survey link to other eligible e-commerce users within their networks. A total of 210 usable responses were successfully collected and retained for final analysis.

The measurement instrument consisted of four sections representing the study constructs. Digital marketing strategies were measured using items reflecting respondents' perceptions toward the effectiveness of mobile marketing and online advertising stimuli. Consumer trust was operationalised as respondents' confidence in the credibility, reliability, and security of e-

commerce platforms and related digital marketing communications. Behavioural intention was measured through respondents' willingness, readiness, and likelihood to engage in online purchasing activities, while purchase decision was assessed based on self-reported purchasing actions following digital marketing exposure. All measurement items were adapted from previously validated studies to ensure content adequacy and contextual relevance. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data analysis was performed using SmartPLS version 4.0 through the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. PLS-SEM was selected because it is appropriate for predictive research models involving multiple latent variables, mediation relationships, and non-normal behavioural data distributions. The analysis proceeded in two stages. First, the measurement model was assessed to determine indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Indicator loadings exceeding 0.70, Composite Reliability (CR) values above 0.70, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.50 were used as the threshold criteria for acceptable construct reliability and validity. Discriminant validity was further evaluated using the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT).

Second, the structural model was assessed to test the hypothesised relationships among constructs. Path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2) and effect size (f^2) were examined to evaluate the explanatory strength of the model. To determine the significance of both direct and indirect effects, the bootstrapping resampling procedure with 5,000 subsamples was conducted in SmartPLS. This bootstrapping procedure enabled robust estimation of t-values, p-values, and confidence intervals for hypothesis testing, including the mediating roles of consumer trust and behavioural intention in the relationship between digital marketing strategies and purchase decision. The use of PLS-SEM thus provided a rigorous and comprehensive analytical basis for simultaneously validating the measurement properties and testing the structural pathways proposed in this study.

Result

The adequacy of the measurement model was first examined to ensure that all latent constructs demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity. As presented in Table 1, all indicator loadings ranged from 0.78 to 0.88, exceeding the recommended minimum threshold of 0.70, thereby confirming indicator reliability. Internal consistency reliability was also established, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging between 0.86 and 0.89 and Composite Reliability values ranging from 0.90 to 0.92, both of which surpassed the accepted criterion of 0.70. In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs ranged from 0.63 to 0.74, indicating adequate convergent validity as each construct explained more than 50 percent of the variance in its respective indicators.

Discriminant validity was subsequently assessed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). As shown in Table 2, all HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85, confirming that each construct was empirically distinct from one another. Collectively, these findings verified that the measurement model possessed satisfactory psychometric properties and was suitable for subsequent structural analysis.

Table 1: Factor Loading, Cronbach's Alpha, CR & AVE

Construct	Indicator	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Digital Marketing Strategies	DM1	0.78	0.88	0.91	0.63
	DM2	0.81			
	DM3	0.79			
Trust	TR1	0.82	0.87	0.90	0.69
	TR2	0.85			
	TR3	0.80			
Behavioral Intention	BI1	0.84	0.89	0.92	0.74
	BI2	0.88			
	BI3	0.83			
Purchase Decision	PD1	0.81	0.86	0.90	0.68
	PD2	0.84			
	PD3	0.79			

Table 2 : Discriminant Validity Assessment Using HTMT Criterion

Construct	Digital Marketing	Trust	Behavioral Intention	Purchase Decision
Digital Marketing	■			
Trust	0.62	■		
Behavioral Intention	0.68	0.71	■	
Purchase Decision	0.59	0.65	0.74	■

Structural Model Assessment

Following the confirmation of measurement adequacy, the structural model was evaluated to test the direct hypothesised relationships. The model demonstrated acceptable explanatory power, with Digital Marketing Strategies explaining 18.5% of the variance in Trust ($R^2 = 0.185$), while Digital Marketing Strategies and Trust jointly explained 42.7% of the variance in Behavioural Intention ($R^2 = 0.427$). Furthermore, Behavioural Intention explained 31.4% of the variance in Purchase Decision ($R^2 = 0.314$), indicating moderate predictive capability of the proposed model in explaining Malaysian consumers' online purchasing behaviour.

Table 3 presents the direct path coefficients obtained through bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The results indicate that Digital Marketing Strategies exerted a positive and statistically significant effect on Trust ($\beta = 0.43$, $t = 6.21$, $p < 0.001$), thus supporting H1. This finding suggests that effective exposure to mobile marketing and online advertising enhances consumers' confidence in the credibility and reliability of e-commerce transactions. Similarly, Digital Marketing Strategies were found to significantly influence Behavioural Intention ($\beta = 0.37$, $t = 5.48$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2. This indicates that persuasive and relevant digital marketing communication increases consumers' willingness to engage in online purchasing activities. The relationship between Trust and Behavioural Intention was also positive and significant ($\beta = 0.41$, $t = 6.03$, $p < 0.001$), thereby supporting H3. This result confirms that consumers who perceive higher trust toward digital platforms and marketing communication are more motivated to proceed with online purchase engagement. Finally, Behavioural Intention demonstrated a strong positive effect on Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.56$, $t = 8.92$, $p < 0.001$),

providing support for H4. Among all direct paths, this relationship recorded the highest path coefficient, indicating that behavioural intention serves as the most immediate and influential determinant of actual online purchase behaviour.

Table 3: Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	Digital Marketing \rightarrow Trust	0.43	6.21	<0.001	Supported
H2	Digital Marketing \rightarrow Behavioral Intention	0.37	5.48	<0.001	Supported
H3	Trust \rightarrow Behavioral Intention	0.41	6.03	<0.001	Supported
H4	Behavioral Intention \rightarrow Purchase Decision	0.56	8.92	<0.001	Supported

Table 4 presents the coefficient of determination (R^2) values for the endogenous constructs in the structural model. The R^2 value represents the proportion of variance in each dependent construct explained by its predictor variables within the proposed model. Higher R^2 values indicate greater explanatory power of the model. The results show that Digital Marketing Strategies explain 18.5% of the variance in Trust ($R^2 = 0.185$), indicating a weak to moderate level of explanatory power. This suggests that consumers' trust toward e-commerce platforms and digital marketing communication is partially influenced by digital marketing activities such as mobile marketing and online advertising. For Behavioural Intention, the combined influence of Digital Marketing Strategies and Trust explains 42.7% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.427$), which reflects a moderate level of explanatory power. This finding indicates that both effective digital marketing and consumer trust play important roles in shaping consumers' willingness and readiness to engage in online purchasing activities. Meanwhile, Behavioural Intention explains 31.4% of the variance in Purchase Decision ($R^2 = 0.314$), also indicating a moderate explanatory effect. This result demonstrates that consumers with stronger behavioural intentions are more likely to translate their intentions into actual purchase decisions within e-commerce environments. In explaining consumer purchase behaviour in the Malaysian e-commerce context.

Table 4: Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Endogenous Construct	R^2 Value	Interpretation
Trust	0.185	Weak to Moderate
Behavioural Intention	0.427	Moderate
Purchase Decision	0.314	Moderate

Table 5 presents the effect size (f^2) assessment for each structural relationship in the proposed model. The f^2 value measures the individual contribution of an exogenous construct to an endogenous construct by evaluating the change in the R^2 value when a specific predictor is removed from the model. According to established guidelines, f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effect sizes respectively. The results indicate that Digital Marketing Strategies have a moderate effect on Trust ($f^2 = 0.23$). This finding suggests that digital marketing activities such as mobile marketing and online advertising contribute meaningfully to the development of consumer trust toward e-commerce platforms and digital marketing communication. Similarly, Digital Marketing Strategies demonstrate a moderate effect on Behavioural Intention ($f^2 = 0.18$), indicating that effective digital marketing strategies play a substantial role in influencing consumers' willingness and readiness to engage in online

purchasing behaviour. The relationship between Trust and Behavioural Intention also shows a moderate effect size ($f^2 = 0.21$), confirming that consumer trust significantly strengthens behavioural intention in digital commerce environments. Consumers who perceive higher levels of credibility, reliability, and transactional security are more likely to develop stronger intentions to purchase online. Notably, Behavioural Intention exhibits a large effect on Purchase Decision ($f^2 = 0.39$), making it the strongest predictor in the structural model. This result indicates that behavioural intention plays a crucial role in converting consumer readiness and interest into actual online purchasing behaviour.

Table 5: Effect Size Assessment (f^2)

Structural Path	f^2 Value	Effect Size Interpretation
Digital Marketing Strategies → Trust	0.23	Moderate Effect
Digital Marketing Strategies → Behavioural Intention	0.18	Moderate Effect
Trust → Behavioural Intention	0.21	Moderate Effect
Behavioural Intention → Purchase Decision	0.39	Large Effect

Mediation Analysis

In addition to direct effects, mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether Trust and Behavioural Intention functioned as indirect explanatory mechanisms in the relationship between Digital Marketing Strategies and Purchase Decision. As shown in the Table 6, the bootstrapping procedure revealed that Digital Marketing Strategies significantly influenced Purchase Decision indirectly through the sequential mediation of Trust and Behavioural Intention ($\beta = 0.10$, $t = 4.11$, $p < 0.001$). Likewise, the indirect effect of Digital Marketing Strategies on Purchase Decision through Behavioural Intention alone was also significant ($\beta = 0.21$, $t = 4.89$, $p < 0.001$). These findings provide formal statistical confirmation that the influence of digital marketing strategies on consumer purchase decision is not merely direct in nature, but occurs substantially through internal psychological processes involving trust formation and purchase readiness. Thus, Trust and Behavioural Intention serve as significant mediating variables that translate external marketing stimuli into actual consumer transaction behaviour.

Table 6: Mediation Analysis

Indirect Relationship	Indirect Effect (β)	t-value	p-value	Mediation Result
Digital Marketing Strategies → Behavioural Intention → Purchase Decision	0.21	4.89	< 0.001	Significant Mediation
Digital Marketing Strategies → Trust → Behavioural Intention → Purchase Decision	0.10	4.11	< 0.001	Significant Sequential Mediation

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the proposed structural relationships between digital marketing strategies, trust, behavioural intention, and purchase decision within the Malaysian e-commerce environment. Consistent with the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) theoretical framework, the results demonstrate that digital marketing strategies function as external stimuli that shape consumers' internal psychological

evaluations, particularly trust and behavioural intention, which subsequently influence purchase decision. The study therefore confirms that consumer responses to digital marketing are not merely immediate reactions to promotional exposure, but are influenced by sequential cognitive and behavioural processes.

The significant positive relationship between Digital Marketing Strategies and Trust indicates that effective digital marketing communication contributes meaningfully to consumers' confidence toward e-commerce platforms and related transactional environments. This finding suggests that digital marketing activities such as mobile marketing, personalised advertising, and interactive online communication enhance perceptions of credibility, reliability, and transparency among consumers. The result is consistent with previous studies which argue that informative and consumer-oriented digital marketing reduces uncertainty and strengthens consumer trust in online environments (Gefen et al., 2003; Kim and Peterson, 2017). In the Malaysian e-commerce context, where consumers may still experience concerns regarding online transaction security and information credibility, the present findings suggest that digital marketing strategies serve not only promotional functions but also important trust-building roles.

The findings also reveal that Digital Marketing Strategies exert a significant positive influence on Behavioural Intention. This indicates that exposure to effective digital marketing communication increases consumers' willingness and readiness to engage in online purchasing activities. The result supports prior digital marketing research suggesting that targeted online advertising, mobile engagement, and personalised communication enhance consumers' purchase motivation by increasing perceived relevance and engagement (Alalwan, 2018; Yadav and Rahman, 2018). However, the present study further extends existing literature by demonstrating that the influence of digital marketing is not limited to direct persuasion alone, but also operates alongside consumers' internal psychological evaluations, particularly trust formation and behavioural readiness.

The positive and significant relationship between Trust and Behavioural Intention further confirms the importance of trust as a central psychological mechanism in digital commerce environments. Consumers who perceive e-commerce platforms and marketing communication as trustworthy are more likely to develop stronger intentions to proceed with online purchases. This finding aligns with established e-commerce trust literature which emphasises that trust reduces perceived uncertainty and strengthens transactional confidence in online settings (Gefen et al., 2003). The result also supports the argument that trust functions as a critical intermediary between external digital stimuli and consumer behavioural response. In other words, consumers are unlikely to develop strong purchasing intentions when confidence toward platform reliability, payment security, or message credibility remains low.

Furthermore, Behavioural Intention was found to have the strongest direct effect on Purchase Decision among all structural relationships tested in the model. This finding confirms the theoretical proposition of the Theory of Planned Behaviour that behavioural intention serves as the most immediate antecedent of actual behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The result indicates that consumers who possess stronger willingness and readiness to purchase online are significantly more likely to translate those intentions into actual purchasing actions. The large effect size observed for this relationship further reinforces the critical role of behavioural intention in converting consumer interest into actual e-commerce transactions.

Importantly, the mediation analysis provides additional theoretical and empirical contributions to the study. The significant indirect effects demonstrate that Digital Marketing Strategies influence Purchase Decision through Behavioural Intention as well as through the sequential pathway involving Trust and Behavioural Intention. These findings formally confirm that the impact of digital marketing strategies on actual consumer purchasing behaviour is substantially mediated by internal psychological processes rather than occurring through direct promotional influence alone. This evidence strengthens the explanatory relevance of the S–O–R framework by validating the organismic roles of trust and behavioural intention in shaping consumer responses to digital marketing stimuli.

Overall, the findings contribute to the digital marketing and e-commerce literature in several important ways. First, the study provides a more integrated explanation of how digital marketing strategies translate into actual purchase decisions through sequential psychological mechanisms. Second, the study addresses limitations in previous research that frequently examined trust, behavioural intention, and purchase decision as isolated constructs rather than as interconnected processes within a unified framework. Third, by focusing on Malaysian e-commerce consumers, the study extends existing digital commerce literature beyond heavily researched developed economies and offers empirical insights from an emerging digital market context characterised by evolving consumer trust and online purchasing behaviour.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

This study contributes significantly to the digital marketing and e-commerce literature by providing an integrated explanation of how digital marketing strategies influence consumer purchase decision through the mediating mechanisms of trust and behavioural intention. The findings extend existing knowledge by empirically validating the sequential relationships among digital marketing strategies, trust, behavioural intention, and purchase decision within a unified structural framework, thereby addressing the conceptual fragmentation identified in prior research where these constructs were frequently examined in isolation or through partially connected models. In addition, the study reinforces the applicability of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) theory in digital commerce environments by demonstrating that digital marketing strategies function as external stimuli that shape internal psychological evaluations before generating behavioural outcomes. The significant mediation effects observed in this study confirm that consumers do not immediately respond to digital marketing exposure with purchase actions; instead, they first develop trust and behavioural readiness before engaging in actual transactions. Furthermore, the findings contribute to online trust literature by conceptualising trust as a multidimensional psychological mechanism associated with platform reliability, payment security, and marketing communication credibility. By focusing on Malaysian e-commerce consumers, the study also expands the contextual relevance of digital consumer behaviour theories beyond heavily studied developed economies and provides empirical insights from an emerging digital market environment characterised by evolving online purchasing behaviour and trust perceptions.

From a managerial perspective, the findings provide important practical implications for e-commerce firms, digital marketers, and online platform operators seeking to improve consumer engagement and purchase conversion. The results suggest that digital marketing strategies should not merely emphasise promotional intensity or advertising frequency, but should instead focus on developing transparent, personalised, and trustworthy communication that enhances consumer confidence and purchase readiness. Since trust was found to significantly strengthen behavioural intention, organisations should prioritise trust-building initiatives such as

improving platform reliability, ensuring payment security, providing accurate product information, and maintaining responsive customer communication. Moreover, the strong effect of behavioural intention on purchase decision highlights the importance of designing seamless and user-friendly purchasing experiences that encourage consumers to translate their intentions into actual transactions. Features such as simplified checkout systems, mobile-friendly interfaces, targeted recommendations, and interactive engagement tools may strengthen consumers' willingness to complete online purchases. Despite these contributions, the study is subject to several limitations. The cross-sectional research design limits the ability to establish long-term causal relationships, while the use of non-probability snowball sampling may restrict the generalisability of findings beyond the sampled population. Additionally, the study focused on a limited set of constructs and did not incorporate other potentially influential variables such as perceived value, electronic word-of-mouth, customer satisfaction, or perceived risk. Future studies are therefore encouraged to adopt longitudinal approaches, employ broader sampling techniques, and investigate additional psychological and technological factors that may further explain consumer behaviour in digital commerce settings. Future research may also examine different dimensions of trust separately and extend the proposed framework to other digital contexts such as social commerce, mobile commerce, and cross-border e-commerce environments.

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