“Drivers of consumers’ trust and online purchase decisions: Evidence from Vietnam’s e-commerce market”

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DRIVERS OF CONSUMERS' TRUST AND ONLINE PURCHASE DECISIONS: EVIDENCE FROM VIETNAM'S E-COMMERCE MARKET

Abstract

E-commerce has become one of Vietnam's most dynamic and fastest-growing sectors, reshaping consumer purchasing behavior in the digital economy. This study investigates the key determinants of consumers' trust and its mediating role in online purchase decisions in Vietnam. Primary data were collected through an online survey of 419 Vietnamese consumers who had made at least one purchase on major e-commerce platforms (e.g., Shopee, TikTok, Facebook) during the previous six months. This sampling frame ensured that all respondents had recent and relevant experience with online shopping in Vietnam's e-commerce market. Data were collected between October 2024 and August 2025 using a structured questionnaire and analyzed with PLS-SEM in SmartPLS 4.1. The findings reveal that website quality ($\beta = 0.235$, $p < 0.01$), reference groups ($\beta = 0.209$, $p < 0.01$), perceived service quality ($\beta = 0.184$, $p < 0.01$), and information security ($\beta = 0.171$, $p < 0.01$) significantly enhance Vietnamese consumers' trust in online shopping. Suppliers' reputation ($\beta = 0.106$, $p < 0.01$) and suppliers' size ($\beta = 0.067$, $p < 0.01$) indirectly strengthen consumers' trust through website quality and perceived service quality, respectively. The study further confirms that trust serves as an essential mediating construct, meaningfully strengthening online purchase decisions among Vietnamese consumers ($\beta = 0.608$, $p < 0.01$). These findings underscore the central importance of trust in shaping consumer behavior in emerging e-commerce markets, indicating that enhancing website quality, improving service reliability, and strengthening data protection can contribute to more sustainable online purchasing behavior among Vietnamese consumers.

Keywords e-commerce, purchase decision, reference group, reputation, service quality, trust, website quality

JEL Classification M31, M37, L81

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INTRODUCTION

E-commerce has become an essential component of global trade and plays a central role in shaping contemporary consumer purchasing behavior. In Vietnam, the rapid expansion of digital infrastructure, widespread smartphone adoption, and increasing familiarity with online payment systems have enabled strong growth in online retailing. However, the digital marketplace also introduces new forms of perceived risk related to product authenticity, transaction security, and post-purchase service quality.

Online shopping differs fundamentally from traditional purchasing environments because consumers cannot directly inspect products and must rely on mediated information such as product descriptions, images, and online reviews. In Vietnam, these risks are amplified by the prevalence of counterfeit goods, inconsistent delivery services, and concerns about data privacy. Moreover, purchasing habits have long been shaped by interpersonal trust and face-to-face verification, making confidence in online platforms particularly critical.

Market surveys consistently show that consumers place high importance on platform reliability, delivery performance, transparent information, and personal data protection when shopping online. However, limited trust in sellers, uncertainty about product quality, and fear of information misuse remain key barriers to adoption. These tensions highlight a broader scientific issue: research still lacks a comprehensive understanding of how platform-related and social factors interact to shape consumers' trust and how this trust ultimately influences online purchase decisions in Vietnam's emerging e-commerce market.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

The rise of digital marketplaces has transformed consumers' decision processes, influencing how they gather information, compare alternatives, and select products. In this context, trust has been repeatedly identified as a critical mechanism that reduces perceived risk and enables online transactions. Building on prior research in online shopping, relationship marketing, and information systems, this section reviews key theoretical perspectives and empirical findings related to consumer trust in e-commerce. The review is structured around three themes: (i) conceptual foundations of online trust and online buying behavior, (ii) platform-related drivers of trust (reputation, size, website quality, service quality, and information security), and (iii) social influences through reference groups and their implications for purchase decisions.

Online shopping has been widely examined in the literature as digital technologies reshape how consumers interact with online retailers. Häubl and Trifts (2000) define online shopping as a transaction conducted through a digital interface connected to a retailer's online store. Similarly, Perea y Monsuwé et al. (2004) consider online shopping as consumers' purchasing behavior via websites or online stores. Ha and Stoel (2009) emphasize that online shopping encourages purchase intentions by delivering functional benefits and enjoyment, while Cheung and Lee (2005) highlight that confidence in product information, system and service quality contributes to consumer satisfaction in online purchases.

As online shopping inherently involves uncertainty, information asymmetry, and the absence of face-to-face interaction, trust becomes a central psychological mechanism that enables consumers to engage confidently with online sellers. Accordingly, a substantial body of research has examined how trust is conceptualized, formed, and expressed in digital environments.

Trust has been interpreted in various ways across the literature. Early sociological and organizational perspectives view trust as a readiness to accept vulnerability in risky interactions, based on expectations of competence and responsibility from other parties (Mayer et al., 1995). Other scholars emphasize the cognitive basis of trust, defining it as perceived reliability or confidence that another party will act in the trustor's interest (Bhattacharya et al., 1998; Boon & Holmes, 1991; Doney & Cannon, 1997). Hosmer (1995) extends this logic by framing trust as expectations of honest behavior and adherence to commitments, even in situations where opportunism is possible.

From a marketing and buyer-seller relationship perspective, trust reflects consumers' beliefs about a seller's integrity, credibility, and fairness (Geyskens et al., 1996). These conceptualizations converge on the idea that trust consists of positive expectations regarding another party's intentions and actions, particularly under conditions of uncertainty. For this study, the definition proposed by Bhattacharya et al. (1998) is considered appropriate, as it succinctly captures the core dimensions of integrity, benevolence, and competence.

The role of trust becomes more important in online contexts, where anonymity, lack of direct control, limited ability to verify information, and potential opportunism can heighten perceived risk (Gefen et al., 2005; Hoffman et al., 1999; Lăzăroiu et al., 2020). Researchers have conceptualized online trust in multiple ways, including:

(1) beliefs about another party's ability, goodwill, and integrity (McKnight & Chervany, 2001; Tan & Sutherland, 2004);

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(2) willingness to depend on or be influenced by another party (Gefen, 2000); and

(3) sense of security and confidence when interacting online (Suh & Han, 2003; Yoon, 2002).

Rousseau et al. (1998) frame trust as a psychological state of accepting vulnerability based on positive expectations, while Shankar et al. (2002) highlight the relevance of trust in environments characterized by anonymity and uncertainty. Similarly, Lee and Turban (2001) describe consumer trust in online shopping as the willingness to rely on sellers based on expectations of appropriate behavior, even in the absence of the ability to control them. Pavlou (2003) further argues that online trust allows consumers to accept potential weaknesses of sellers after evaluating their characteristics.

Suppliers' reputation refers to how consumers perceive a firm as credible, honest, and responsible when interacting with customers (Doney & Cannon, 1997). In online business environments, reputation serves as a crucial heuristic that helps consumers infer operational reliability, product authenticity, and service performance. Prior studies show that a strong reputation reduces perceived risk and enhances consumer confidence in online transactions (Agag & El-Masry, 2017; Dolatabadi & Ebrahimi, 2010; Qalati et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2019). In Vietnam, where legal enforcement and online consumer protection are still developing, reputation becomes especially important for mitigating concerns about fraud or misinformation. Recent evidence from Tran and Nguyen (2022) further confirms the significant positive association between online suppliers' reputation and consumers' cognitive trust. Overall, consumers evaluate sellers' reputations through prior service experiences or, in the absence of such experiences, through platform-provided signals, such as customer feedback, ratings, and testimonials.

Along with reputation, the size of a supplier can shape consumer trust. Consumers often believe that larger firms possess sufficient resources to ensure reliable service and would incur substantial losses if they were to violate customer trust. This perception can make large suppliers appear more credible and stable (Jarvenpaa et al., 1999; Koufaris, 2004). Empirical studies have consistently confirmed a positive relationship between supplier size and online trust (Agag & El-Masry, 2017; Jadil et al., 2022). In Vietnam's online marketplace, consumers often prefer larger sellers because they believe such firms provide more dependable service and clearer support channels in case of transaction issues. However, as consumers frequently infer firm size through website presentation and service experience, its influence may operate indirectly through website quality and perceived service quality rather than directly. Therefore, this study focuses on examining the indirect effects of supplier size on trust through these two mediators.

Website quality is a fundamental determinant of consumers' trust in online shopping. Because consumers cannot inspect products physically, they rely heavily on information and interface cues provided by websites. Clear product descriptions, accurate information, intuitive navigation, and professional website design all enhance consumers' perceptions of reliability, thereby strengthening trust. Empirical evidence widely supports a positive effect of website quality on online trust (Karim et al., 2021; Mazaheri et al., 2012; Moreno et al., 2022; Nguyen & Tran, 2024; Qalati et al., 2021; Sarah et al., 2021; To et al., 2024). Accordingly, website quality serves as a key signal through which consumers assess a seller's professionalism and credibility.

Perceived service quality has long been recognized as an essential driver of trust and long-term customer relationships (Kim et al., 2004). In online transactions, service quality includes elements such as reliable delivery, responsive customer service, warranties, and customized support (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Gefen et al., 2003; Grazioli & Jarvenpaa, 2003; Pennington et al., 2003). More recent empirical evidence consistently confirms the significant positive influence of service quality on consumers' trust in online shopping across different markets (Aldweeri et al., 2019; Qalati et al., 2021). This relationship is also relevant in Vietnam, where consumers tend to develop stronger trust and loyalty toward sellers that provide dependable delivery, professional support, and satisfactory service experiences.

Concerns about information security remain among the primary barriers to online shopping adoption. Consumers must disclose personal in-

formation (e.g., their home address, demographics, or payment details); thus, their perceptions of data protection and transaction safety strongly influence their trust. Security assurances can therefore provide a strategic advantage in digital commerce (Spar & Bussgang, 1996; Yang et al., 2003). Empirical evidence shows that clear privacy commitments and secure transaction procedures positively affect trust (Cong et al., 2024; Datta & Acharjee, 2018; Dolatabadi & Ebrahimi, 2010; Riquelme & Román, 2014; Tran & Nguyen, 2022; Yoon, 2002). Accordingly, information security is a critical determinant of trust among Vietnamese online consumers.

External social influences and informal experience-sharing also play an important role in shaping trust. While early studies emphasized third-party recognition or institutional mechanisms (Cheung & Lee, 2001), more recent research highlights the effect of reference groups (family, friends, colleagues, and online communities) on both trust and online purchasing behavior. Evidence suggests that reference groups significantly contribute to consumers' trust judgments (Ding et al., 2020; Hasslinger et al., 2007). In Vietnam, where interpersonal relationships significantly influence consumer decisions, reference groups are expected to have a substantial impact on trust formation and online purchasing behavior.

A purchase decision refers to consumers' selection of a particular product or service after evaluating their needs, available information, and potential risks (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Trust is a central determinant in this process, especially in online environments where perceived risk is higher. Recent studies have confirmed that trust has a strongly positive effect on online purchase decisions (Hidayat et al., 2021; Moreno et al., 2022). Therefore, understanding how trust is formed is essential for explaining consumers' online buying behavior.

Prior studies have identified a set of key factors influencing consumers' trust in online shopping, including suppliers' reputation and size, website quality, perceived service quality, information security, and reference groups. While such studies provide valuable insights, a more comprehensive understanding of how these drivers collectively shape trust and how trust influences purchase decisions remains limited, particularly in emerging markets such as Vietnam.

This study aims to examine the key determinants of consumers' trust in online shopping and to analyze how trust influences online purchase decisions in Vietnam. Building on the literature reviewed above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Suppliers' reputation indirectly and positively impacts consumers' trust in online shopping in Vietnam through website quality.

H2: Suppliers' reputation indirectly and positively impacts consumers' trust in online shopping in Vietnam through perceived service quality.

H3: Suppliers' size indirectly and positively affects consumers' trust in online shopping in Vietnam through website quality.

H4: Suppliers' size indirectly and positively affects consumers' trust in online shopping in Vietnam through perceived service quality.

H5: Website quality positively impacts consumers' trust in online shopping in Vietnam.

H6: Perceived service quality positively impacts consumers' trust in online shopping in Vietnam.

H7: Information security positively impacts consumers' trust in online shopping in Vietnam.

H8: Reference groups positively impacts consumers' trust in online shopping in Vietnam.

H9: Consumers' trust in online shopping positively impacts consumers' online purchase decision in Vietnam.

The research model has four direct factors and two indirect factors that affect consumers' trust in online shopping: suppliers' reputation, suppliers' size, perceived service quality, Website quality, Information security, and Reference group. Moreover, Consumers' trust influences Online purchase decisions.

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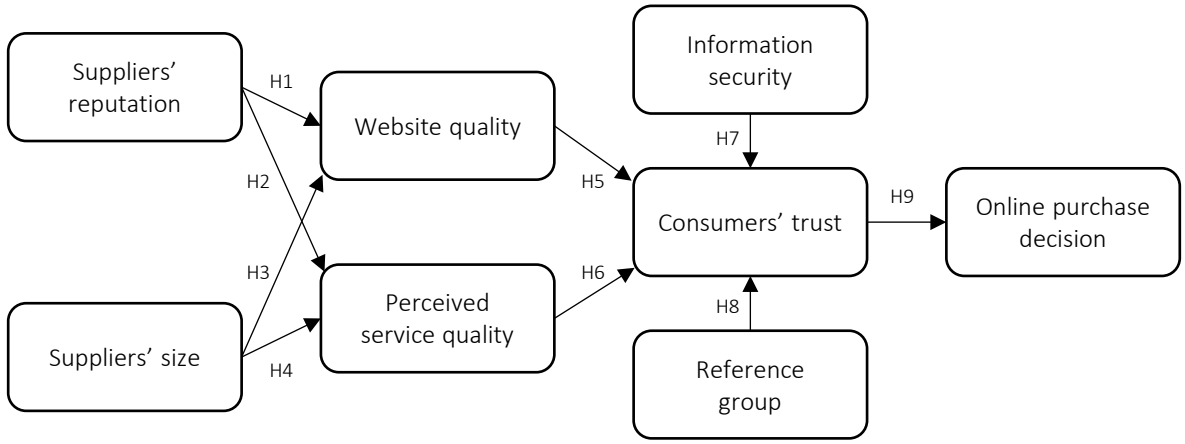

Figure 1. Proposed research model

2. METHODOLOGY

The study targeted Vietnamese consumers who had previously made at least one online purchase within the past six months and used common e-commerce platforms (e.g., Shopee, TikTok, Facebook Marketplace). To ensure basic diversity, the sample included consumers across multiple age groups and product categories. Convenience sampling approach was adopted due to the accessibility of online users. The questionnaire was administered via Google Forms, and distributed through social networks and community groups. Data were collected from October 2024 to August 2025, yielding 451 responses, of which 419 valid cases remained after screening. This sample size exceeds standard guidelines, such as the "10-times rule," and meets the recommendations for the minimum sample size in PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2022).

The survey comprised two sections. Section 1 captured demographic characteristics and online shopping behavior. Section 2 comprised 29 items that measured six antecedents of trust, the trust construct, and the online purchase decision. All items used a five-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree") and were adapted from prior validated sources. Respondent participation was voluntary, and individuals were free to skip any question at their discretion. All information was collected anonymously and was used strictly for academic research purposes. Data were analyzed using PLS-SEM in SmartPLS 4.1.0.0. The coefficients and indicators assessed included outer loadings, composite reliability, convergent validity, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for multicollinearity, and model fit and effect size indicators such as Bootstrap estimates, SRMR, R^2, and f^2.

Table 1. Sample characteristics (n = 419)

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	175	41.8
	Female	244	58.2
Age	Under 18	27	6.4
	From 19 to 25	193	46.1
	From 26 to 35	165	39.4
	From 36 to 45	20	4.8
	Over 46	14	3.3
Occupation	Student	143	34.1
	Office worker/ administrative staff	149	35.6
	Professional/ specialist	79	18.9
	Business owner/ self-employed	32	7.6
	Other	16	3.8
Online shopping frequency (past 6 months)	1-3 times	119	28.4
	4-6 times	155	37.0
	7-9 times	90	21.5
	More than 10 times	55	13.1

Table 1 summarizes the demographics of the 419 survey participants. The sample comprises 41.8% male and 58.2% female participants. In terms of age, the majority are young adults, with the 19-25 group accounting for 46.1% and the 26-35 group for 39.4%, reflecting the predominance of digitally active consumers in Vietnam's e-commerce market. The occupational distribution is balanced, with office workers/administrative staff (35.6%) and students (34.1%) forming the two largest groups, followed by profes-

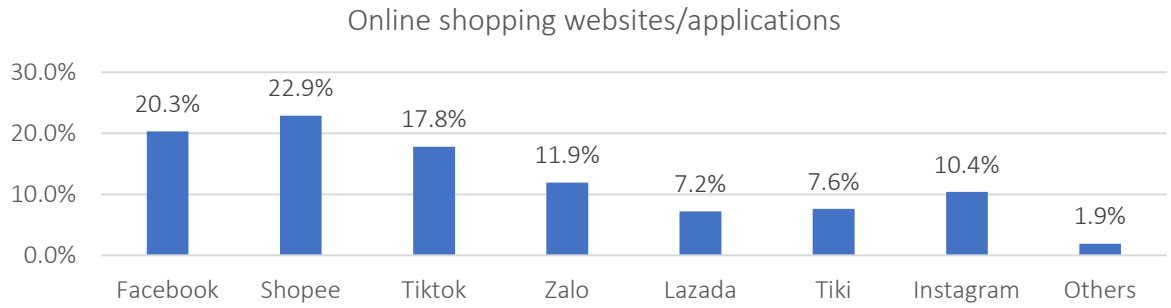

Figure 2. Classification of the use of online shopping websites/applications

sionals/specialists (18.9%), and a smaller share of business owners and other occupations. Regarding shopping behavior, most respondents made online purchases regularly in the past six months, with 4-6 times (37.0%) and 1-3 times (28.4%) being the most common frequencies. A notable proportion (34.6%) reported purchasing seven times or more, indicating a high level of engagement with online shopping platforms. Overall, the sample appropriately represents active online consumers and is well-suited for examining trust and online purchase decisions in Vietnam's e-commerce context.

Figure 2 shows that the Shopee, Facebook, and TikTok platforms are preferred by Vietnamese consumers when shopping online, respectively.

3. RESULTS

This section presents the empirical findings for both the measurement and structural models, along with the results of evaluating the nine hypotheses formulated from the literature review. The outcomes of the reliability and validity assessment derived from the variance-based structural model estimation are presented in Table 2.

Hair et al. (2014) note that convergent validity is confirmed when the measurement constructs exhibit Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.70, CR coefficients ≥ 0.70, and the AVE coefficient ≥ 0.50. Table 2 show that all constructs satisfy these criteria, with Cronbach's Alpha and CR coefficients exceed-

Table 2. Assessment results for construct reliability and convergent validity

No.	Latent constructs and observed indicators		Outer loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
1	**REPUTATION (REPUT)**			0.892	0.933	0.823
	The website I have visited or purchased online is very famous	REPUT1	0.941			
	This website is known and used by many people to make purchases	REPUT2	0.906			
	This website is very reputable	REPUT3	0.874			
2	**SUPPLIERS' SIZE**			0.858	0.933	0.875
	The company that owns the website is large	SIZE1	0.937			
	The company that owns the website is the largest provider in the online business market	SIZE2	0.934			
3	**PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY (SEQUA)**			0.896	0.924	0.708
	Products displayed on the website are always available	SEQUA1	0.766			
	The company owns a website with fast delivery speed	SEQUA2	0.845			
	The company has a highly reliable form of payment	SEQUA3	0.885			
	The company's products ensure quality	SEQUA4	0.816			
	The company that owns the website has good after-sales service	SEQUA5	0.890			
4	**WEBSITE QUALITY (WEQUA)**			0.959	0.969	0.861
	The website has a friendly interface	WEQUA1	0.924			
	The website has a reasonable presentation	WEQUA2	0.954			
	This website is easy to use	WEQUA3	0.950			
	I can easily find the information I need	WEQUA4	0.937			
	The website clearly shows the company's contact information	WEQUA5	0.873			

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Table 2 (cont.). Assessment results for construct reliability and convergent validity

No.	Latent constructs and observed indicators		Outer loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
5	**INFORMATION SECURITY (IFSEC)**			0.935	0.954	0.837
	The website explains how they will use my information specifically	IFSEC1	0.884			
	The website is trying to keep my personal and account information secure	IFSEC2	0.937			
	The customer support service responds promptly, professionally, and clearly to reports of information leaks on e-commerce sites, providing a sense of security while shopping online.	IFSEC3	0.924			
	The support services for refunds and the protection of consumer rights provided by e-commerce platforms give me a sense of security when shopping online.	IFSEC4	0.914			
6	**REFERENCE GROUP (REFER)**			0.925	0.952	0.869
	My family's feedback and previous online shopping experiences reassure me when I buy products online.	REFER1	0.949			
	My friends' viewpoints and experiences enhance my confidence in online shopping.	REFER2	0.890			
	The discussions and shared experiences on forums make me more certain about my online buying decisions.	REFER3	0.957			
7	**CONSUMERS' TRUST (TRUST)**			0.907	0.942	0.843
	The website gives me the best benefit	TRUST1	0.895			
	This website is trustworthy for trading	TRUST2	0.939			
	The website will keep its promise	TRUST3	0.920			
8	**ONLINE PURCHASE DECISION (PURDE)**			0.907	0.935	0.782
	I completely trust the information the website provides when deciding to shop online	PURDE1	0.870			
	I have provided my personal and account information to this website	PURDE2	0.904			
	I have introduced my family and friends to online shopping on this website	PURDE3	0.865			
	I feel secure when paying in advance at this website	PURDE4	0.898			

ing 0.7, AVE values above 0.5, and outer loadings greater than 0.7. This indicates that the constructs possess both reliability and convergent validity.

Discriminant validity among the latent constructs was examined using the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). This indicator provides evidence of whether constructs are empirically distinct from one another. Following the criteria proposed by Henseler et al. (2015), discriminant validity is considered inadequate when the HTMT value between any two constructs exceeds 0.90, indicating that the constructs may be measuring similar phenomena. Conversely, HTMT values of 0.85 or lower suggest a satisfactory level of discriminant validity and confirm that the constructs are sufficiently differentiated.

The data in Table 3 indicate that all HTMT indices between latent variables (which have no correlation relationship in the proposed model) are below 0.85. This confirms that the scales possess discriminant validity.

Table 3. Assessment of discriminant validity (HTMT criterion)

	IFSEC	PURDE	REFER	REPUT	SEQUA	SIZE	TRUST	WEQUA
IFSEC								
PURDE	0.507							
REFER	0.642	0.466						
REPUT	0.435	0.494	0.423					
SEQUA	0.604	0.481	0.506	0.535				
SIZE	0.488	0.476	0.488	0.672	0.593			
TRUST	0.592	0.668	0.565	0.495	0.553	0.493		
WEQUA	0.669	0.476	0.560	0.627	0.581	0.534	0.593	

Table 4. Results of bootstrapping for direct effects

Hypo-theses	Structural paths	Path coefficient (β)	p-values	Confidence intervals	VIF	Effect size (f^2)	Hypothesis conclusion
H7	IFSEC → TRUST	0.171	0.008	0.042 – 0.296	2.134	0.024	Accepted
H8	REFER → TRUST	0.209	0.000	0.096 – 0.325	1.682	0.045	Accepted
	REPUT → SEQUA	0.271	0.000	0.150 – 0.388	1.530	0.071	
	REPUT → WEQUA	0.452	0.000	0.332 – 0.570	1.530	0.211	
H6	SEQUA → TRUST	0.184	0.002	0.065 – 0.300	1.613	0.036	Accepted
	SIZE → SEQUA	0.362	0.000	0.236 – 0.482	1.530	0.126	
	SIZE → WEQUA	0.219	0.000	0.106 – 0.331	1.530	0.050	
H9	TRUST → PURDE	0.608	0.000	0.514 – 0.695	1.000	0.587	Accepted
H5	WEQUA → TRUST	0.235	0.000	0.111 – 0.354	1.900	0.050	Accepted

The satisfactory reliability indicators allow the analysis to advance to the structural model evaluation. To examine the significance and strength of the hypothesized relationships, a Bootstrapping procedure was performed with 5,000 resamples at a 5% significance level. The results of the direct effect estimations obtained from the bootstrapping process are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4 indicates that all p-values for the effects are below 0.01, confirming the statistical significance of these relationships. Additionally, the confidence intervals exclude the value 0. The calculated VIF coefficients are all under 3, so the model has no multicollinearity.

The results in Table 4 confirm the significant impact of IFSEC, REFER, SEQUA, and WEQUA on TRUST, as well as the strong influence of TRUST on PURDE. Among these factors, WEQUA and REFER show the strongest effects on TRUST, emphasizing the importance of website quality and credible references in building trust. SEQUA and IFSEC also contribute positively, though to a lesser extent. In addition, TRUST has a critical role in driving purchase decisions.

Table 5 presents the estimated indirect effects of the predictor variables on the outcome constructs, TRUST and PURDE, derived from the bootstrapping procedure.

Table 5 shows that all reported p-values ≤ 0.05, indicating the statistical significance of the corresponding relationships. Moreover, the confidence intervals exclude zero, providing additional support for the robustness of these effects. These results suggest that both REPUT and SIZE have significant indirect effects on TRUST through two mediating variables: SEQUA and WEQUA. Reputation exhibits a stronger impact via website quality, highlighting the importance of creating high-quality websites to foster trust. Meanwhile, supplier's size shows a more pronounced effect through service quality, suggesting that larger organizations tend to deliver higher service standards, thereby enhancing trust.

Table 5. Indirect effects estimated through bootstrapping

Hypothesis	Structural paths	Path coefficient (β)	p-values	Confidence intervals	Hypothesis conclusion
H1	REPUT → WEQUA → TRUST	0.106	0.001	0.047 – 0.172	Accepted
	WEQUA → TRUST → PURDE	0.143	0.000	0.067 – 0.222	
	REPUT → SEQUA → TRUST → PURDE	0.030	0.016	0.010 – 0.059	
H3	SIZE → WEQUA → TRUST	0.051	0.016	0.016 – 0.100	Accepted
H2	REPUT → SEQUA → TRUST	0.050	0.014	0.016 – 0.095	Accepted
H4	SIZE → SEQUA → TRUST	0.067	0.005	0.022 – 0.116	Accepted
	IFSEC → TRUST → PURDE	0.104	0.012	0.026 – 0.186	
	SIZE → SEQUA → TRUST → PURDE	0.041	0.007	0.013 – 0.072	
	REFER → TRUST → PURDE	0.127	0.001	0.056 – 0.207	
	SEQUA → TRUST → PURDE	0.112	0.002	0.040 – 0.184	
	SIZE → WEQUA → TRUST → PURDE	0.031	0.018	0.010 – 0.062	
	REPUT → WEQUA → TRUST → PURDE	0.065	0.002	0.028 – 0.109	

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Thus, the research results in Table 4 and Table 5 indicate that all of the proposed hypotheses are empirically supported.

H1: Suppliers' reputation indirectly and positively impacts consumers' trust in online shopping in Vietnam through Website quality (β= 0.106, p <0.01).

H2: Suppliers' reputation indirectly and positively impacts consumers' trust in online shopping in Vietnam through Perceived service quality (β= 0.050, p <0.05).

H3: Suppliers' size indirectly and positively affects consumers' trust in online shopping in Vietnam through Website quality (β= 0.051, p <0.05).

H4: Suppliers' size indirectly and positively affects consumers' trust in online shopping in Vietnam through Perceived service quality (β= 0.067, p <0.01).

H5: Website quality positively impacts consumers' trust in online shopping in Vietnam (β= 0.235, p <0.01).

H6: Perceived service quality positively impacts consumers' trust in online shopping in Vietnam (β= 0.184, p <0.01).

H7: Information security positively impacts consumers' trust in online shopping in Vietnam (β= 0.171, p <0.01).

H8: Reference groups positively impacts consumers' trust in online shopping in Vietnam (β= 0.209, p <0.01).

H9: Consumers' trust in online shopping positively impacts consumers' online purchase decision in Vietnam (β= 0.608, p <0.01).

The f^2 coefficient assesses the degree to which an exogenous latent variable contributes to explaining an endogenous construct. Cohen (2013) suggests that f^2 values near 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate small, moderate, and significant effects, respectively. When $f^2 \leq 0.02$, the predictor is considered to have no meaningful explanatory contribution to the dependent construct. As shown in Table 4, all predictors in the model demonstrate f^2 values greater than 0.02, indicating that each exogenous variable contributes to explaining variance in the corresponding endogenous constructs.

Specifically, WEQUA, SEQUA, IFSEC, and REFER exert small effects on TRUST, with f^2 values of 0.050, 0.036, 0.024, and 0.045, respectively. Likewise, REPUT and SIZE display small effect magnitudes on SEQUA, reflected in f^2 values of 0.071 and 0.126. The SIZE variable also shows a small influence on WEQUA (f^2 = 0.050). In contrast, REPUT yields a medium-level impact on WEQUA (f^2 = 0.211). Finally, TRUST exhibits a strong and substantial effect on PURDE, evidenced by a large f^2 value of 0.587.

Table 6. R^2 coefficients

Variable	R^2	R^2 adjusted
PURDE	0.370	0.368
SEQUA	0.320	0.317
TRUST	0.424	0.418
WEQUA	0.369	0.366

The adjusted R^2 coefficient reflects the proportion of variance in an endogenous construct accounted for by its associated predictors. As reported in Table 6, the adjusted R^2 value for WEQUA is 0.366, indicating that the predictors REPUT and SIZE collectively account for 36.6% of the variance in this construct, while the remaining 63.4% is attributable to unexplained influences external to the model. Likewise, these two predictors account for 31.7% of the variance in SEQUA.

The adjusted R^2 coefficient indicates the proportion of variance in an endogenous construct explained by the corresponding predictor variables. As reported in Table 6, the adjusted R^2 value for WEQUA is 0.366, meaning that REPUT and SIZE account for 36.6% of the variation in WEQUA, while the remaining 63.4% originates from influences beyond the specified model. In a similar manner, REPUT and SIZE explain 31.7% of the variation in SEQUA. For the TRUST construct, the predictors WEQUA, SEQUA, IFSEC, and REFER collectively explain 41.8% of the observed variation, with 58.2% attributed to factors outside the analytical scope. Furthermore, TRUST accounts for 36.8% of the variation in PURDE.

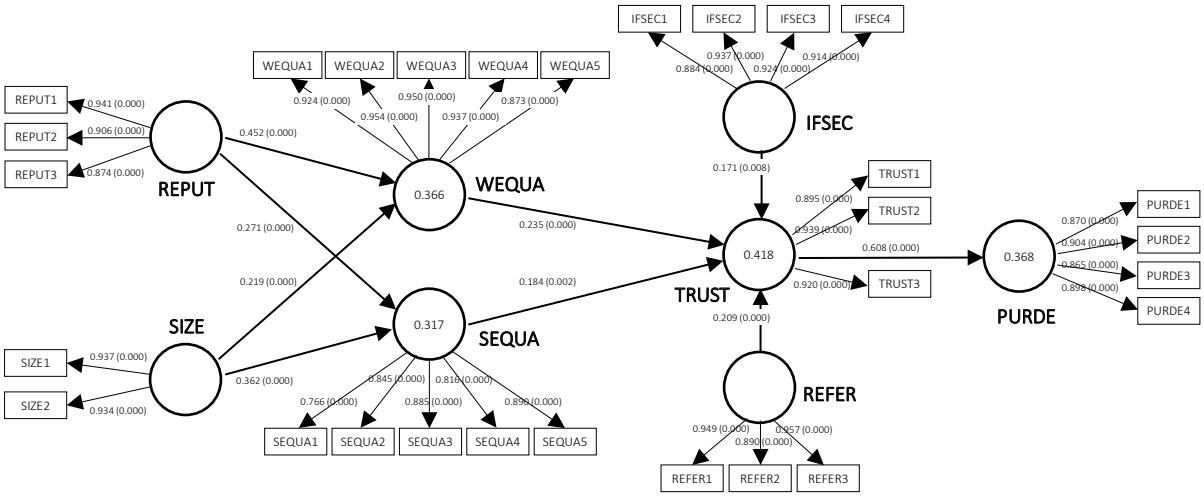

Figure 3. The confirmed research model

Figure 3 presents the outcomes of the structural model estimation. Path coefficients and corresponding p-values are displayed along the directional relationships between exogenous and endogenous constructs. Meanwhile, outer loadings and their significance levels signify the strength of association between observed indicators and latent constructs. The adjusted R^2 values are shown within the endogenous constructs, reflecting the explanatory power of the model.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reconfirm the central role of trust in shaping consumers' online purchase decisions in Vietnam's e-commerce market. Trust has a strong and positive influence on buying behavior, consistent with prior research in online consumer psychology (Hidayat et al., 2021; Moreno et al., 2022). This result underscores trust as a key mechanism through which consumers mitigate perceived risk and become willing to complete transactions in environments characterized by information asymmetry and limited direct control.

Among the antecedents of trust, website quality and reference groups emerge as the most influential factors. This result aligns with evidence from Qalati et al. (2021), To et al. (2024), and Nguyen and Tran (2024), which show that clear information, intuitive navigation, and professional website design substantially strengthen perceived reliability. The significant impact of reference groups underscores the importance of informal social influence in Vietnam, where consumers frequently rely on recommendations and shared experiences from family, friends, and online communities. This finding supports earlier studies on social proof in online contexts (Ding et al., 2020; Hasslinger et al., 2007), suggesting that in emerging markets, social influence may compensate for weaker institutional safeguards.

Perceived service quality and information security also positively contribute to trust, although with moderate effect sizes. This pattern is consistent with research highlighting the importance of reliable delivery, secure payment systems, and responsive customer support in building consumer confidence (Hsu et al., 2018; Riquelme & Román, 2014; Tran & Nguyen, 2022). In Vietnam, persistent concerns about product authenticity and improper use of personal data make information security a critical component of trust formation.

The results further indicate that suppliers' reputation and size exert an indirect influence on trust through website quality and service quality. This result suggests that Vietnamese consumers may evaluate reputation and scale primarily through observable features, such as website professionalism, clarity of information, delivery reliability, and service responsiveness, rather than relying solely on brand perceptions. This finding builds upon prior studies by Jarvenpaa et al. (1999), Agag and El-Masry (2017), and Jadil et al. (2022), highlighting that in emerging e-commerce markets, firm-level characteristics must be translated into tangible online experiences before they can meaningfully enhance trust.

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Theoretically, this study makes a significant contribution by integrating technological, organizational, and social drivers into a unified model of online trust formation in Vietnam. The results support a multidimensional perspective, showing that platform quality, service performance, information security, supplier characteristics, and social interactions jointly influence consumer trust and subsequent purchase decisions. For practitioners, the findings underscore the importance of coordinated investments in website design, service processes, data protection, and social engagement strategies, such as customer reviews, testimonials, and community interaction, to strengthen and sustain consumer trust.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the determinants of consumer trust and analyzed how trust influences online purchase decisions in Vietnam's e-commerce market. Using survey data from 419 online shoppers and applying PLS-SEM, the study examined the impact of suppliers' reputation and size, website quality, perceived service quality, information security, reference groups, and trust on online purchasing behavior.

The empirical results indicate that website quality, perceived service quality, information security, and reference groups have a direct and positive impact on consumer trust. Trust, in turn, exerts a strong positive impact on online purchase decisions, confirming its central mediating role. In addition, suppliers' reputation and size indirectly enhance trust through website quality and service quality. These findings suggest that consumers in Vietnam primarily interpret firm-level attributes through concrete online experiences and social features.

The study offers several practical implications. E-commerce businesses should prioritize improving website interfaces, ensuring transparency of product information, and enhancing service reliability, including delivery performance and after-sales support. Strengthening mechanisms for data protection and secure transactions is also essential. Furthermore, firms can leverage social influence by encouraging customer reviews, testimonials, and community engagement to reinforce trust and credibility.

Despite its valuable findings, the study still presents several limitations. The reliance on convenience sampling and the predominance of younger respondents may limit the generalizability of the findings to other demographic groups. Because the study relies on cross-sectional data, it is not possible to capture how trust and related behaviors evolve over time. Future research may adopt longitudinal designs, diversify respondent profiles, and investigate emerging factors such as sustainability concerns, trust in AI-driven recommendations, or cultural values to deepen understanding of trust formation in online environments.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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Writing – review & editing: Bui Van Vien, Pham Quang Tin.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the research, authorship, or publication of this manuscript.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY

Hello Sir/Madam!

I am Bui Van Vien, Faculty of Management, University of Transport Technology. I am conducting a survey to examine factors influencing consumer trust and online shopping decisions in Vietnam. Please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire below.

Your participation is voluntary, and all responses will remain anonymous and be used solely for academic research purposes.

Thank you very much for your valuable cooperation.

PART 1: RESPONDENTS' PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Age: ☐ Under 18 ☐ From 19 to 25 ☐ From 26 to 35
☐ From 36 to 45 ☐ Over 46

3. Occupation: ☐ Student
☐ Office worker/administrative staff
☐ Professional/specialist (e.g., engineer, teacher, doctor)
☐ Business owner/self-employed
☐ Other (please specify): _____

4. Monthly income (VND): ☐ Under 5 million ☐ 5-9 million ☐ 10-20 million
☐ Over 20 million ☐ Prefer not to say

PART 2: SURVEY QUESTIONS

5. Have you ever visited an online shopping website?

☐ Yes ☐ No (end survey)

6. Have you ever shopped online?

☐ Yes ☐ No (end survey)

7. How many times have you shopped online in the past six months?

☐ 1-3 times ☐ 4-6 times

☐ 7-9 times ☐ More than 10 times

8. Please write down the names of a few online shopping websites you visited or purchased from:
.....

CAN YOU PLEASE EVALUATE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS

Please rate the following statements on a 5-point scale, with 1: strongly disagree and 5: strongly agree.

Note: These questions are for the website address answered in question number 8.

No.	Survey Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1	**REPUTATION**					
1.1	The website I have visited or purchased online is very famous.					
1.2	This website is known and used by many people to make purchases.					
1.3	This website is very reputable.					
2	SUPPLIERS' SIZE					
2.1	The company that owns the website is large.					
2.2	The company that owns the website is the largest provider in the online business market.					
3	**PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY**					
3.1	Products displayed on the website are always available.					
3.2	The company owns a website with fast delivery speed.					
3.3	The company has a highly reliable form of payment.					
3.4	The company's products ensure quality.					
3.5	The company that owns the website has good after-sales service.					
4	**WEBSITE QUALITY**					
4.1	The website has a friendly interface.					
4.2	The website has a reasonable presentation.					
4.3	This website is easy to use.					
4.4	I can easily find the information I need.					
4.5	The website clearly shows the company's contact information.					
5	**INFORMATION SECURITY**					
5.1	The website explains how they will use my information specifically.					
5.2	The website is trying to keep my personal and account information secure.					
5.3	The customer support service handles quickly, clearly, and professionally when reports detect information leaks on e-commerce sites, making me feel safe when shopping online.					
5.4	The service of supporting money or returning goods and ensuring consumer rights of e-commerce sites makes me feel safe when shopping online.					
6	**REFERENCE GROUP**					
6.1	My family's feedback and previous online shopping experiences reassure me when I buy products online.					
6.2	My friends' viewpoints and experiences enhance my confidence in online shopping.					
6.3	The discussions and shared experiences on forums make me more certain about my online buying decisions.					
7	**CONSUMERS' TRUST**					
7.1	The website gives me the best benefit.					
7.2	This website is trustworthy for trading.					
7.3	The website will keep its promise.					
8	ONLINE PURCHASE DECISION					
8.1	I completely trust the information the website provides when deciding to shop online.					
8.2	I have provided my personal and account information to this website.					
8.3	I have introduced my family and friends to online shopping on this website.					
8.4	I feel secure when paying in advance at this website.					

Sincerely thank!

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