

Electronic word of mouth, price perception, and purchase-related behavioral responses: evidence from Universitas Musamus students

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Article info

Article history:

Received: 18 Aug 2026

Accepted: 28 Sep 2026

Published: 11 Oct 2026

Keywords:

electronic word of mouth;

price perception;

purchase-related behavioral
responses

Abstract

This study examines the relationships of electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) and price perception with purchase-related behavioral response (PRBR) among Universitas Musamus students using Shopee in Merauke, South Papua. A quantitative cross-sectional associative design was employed with 191 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using multiple linear regression in IBM SPSS Statistics 25. The results show that E-WOM was positively associated with PRBR ($\beta = 0.266, p < .001$), while price perception demonstrated a stronger positive association ($\beta = 0.686, p < .001$). The model was statistically significant, $F(2, 188) = 362.746, p < .001$, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.792. These findings indicate that both social-digital information and economic evaluation are relevant to students' purchase-related responses, with price perception showing the stronger relative contribution in the analyzed sample. The findings provide contextual evidence from an underrepresented Eastern Indonesian e-commerce setting.

JEL classifications: M31, D12, D91

Citation:

Andriono, M.A., Longgy, D.H.A, and Parapaga, F.B. (2026). Electronic word of mouth, price perception, and purchase-related behavioral responses: evidence from Universitas Musamus students. *Global Advances in Business Studies*, 5(2), 88-99. <https://doi.org/10.55584/Gabs.005.02.3>

1. Introduction

Digital commerce has increasingly transformed how consumers search for information, compare alternatives, and make purchasing decisions. University students constitute a particularly relevant segment because their purchasing activities are closely integrated with digital platforms, social media, and online information sources. Previous research on Indonesian students has shown that online shopping behavior is shaped by informational, social, and perceived-value considerations rather than by transactional convenience alone (Kuswanto et al., 2019). Evidence from Eastern Indonesia further indicates that younger consumers actively engage in online shopping and frequently rely on consumer-generated product reviews when evaluating purchasing alternatives (Akbar et al., 2023). These developments make digital marketplaces an important setting for examining how consumers combine information and economic value in their purchase-related behavior.

Unlike conventional retail environments, online consumers cannot directly inspect, touch, or experience products before completing a transaction. This limitation increases reliance on information generated by other consumers to reduce uncertainty and evaluate product suitability. Electronic word of mouth (E-WOM), including reviews, comments, ratings, photographs, and recommendations, therefore represents an important source of social-digital information in online purchasing (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Huete-Alcocer, 2017). Meta-analytic evidence further indicates that the characteristics and perceived usefulness of E-WOM are associated with consumers' intention to buy (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Thus, E-WOM is relevant not merely because consumer information is available online, but because it can support information search, alternative evaluation, and confidence in purchasing.

Economic evaluation constitutes another important component of online purchasing. Price perception differs conceptually from the objective monetary price offered by a seller because it reflects consumers' subjective assessment of whether a price is affordable, competitive, consistent with product quality, and appropriate for the expected benefits (Dodds et al., 1991; Zeithaml, 1988). Consequently, consumers exposed to the same listed price may evaluate its attractiveness differently according to purchasing power, expected quality, available alternatives, and perceived benefits. This distinction is particularly relevant in e-commerce, where consumers can compare offers across sellers while simultaneously considering product information and transaction-related costs. Research on digital commerce similarly demonstrates that price-related evaluation remains important in shaping subsequent consumer responses (Do et al., 2023).

The present study uses the theory of consumption values (TCV) as its primary theoretical foundation for understanding consumer behavior. TCV proposes that consumer choice can be influenced by functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional values, whose relative importance may vary across purchasing situations (Sheth et al., 1991). Within the present context, price perception is closely associated with functional value because consumers evaluate price relative to affordability, quality, competing alternatives, and expected benefits. E-WOM, in contrast, contributes social and epistemic value by providing knowledge and evaluations derived from other consumers' experiences. These two predictors therefore represent different but potentially complementary value considerations in digital purchasing.

The stimulus–organism–response (SOR) framework is employed as a supporting conceptual perspective rather than as a fully tested theoretical model. SOR distinguishes environmental stimuli from consumers' internal cognitive or affective processing and subsequent behavioral responses (Jacoby, 2002). Recent digital-consumer studies have positioned E-WOM and other online information as external stimuli that are interpreted through internal consumer evaluations before behavioral responses emerge (Kunja et al., 2022; Yadav et al., 2022). Accordingly, E-WOM is conceptually positioned as an external social-digital stimulus, whereas price perception is understood as an internal cognitive and economic

evaluation associated with the organism component because it reflects consumers' subjective assessment of price rather than objective price itself. Purchase-related behavioral response (PRBR) represents the Response examined in this study. However, because the empirical model does not estimate a sequential pathway from E-WOM through price perception to PRBR, the study does not claim to test or validate the complete S–O–R mechanism.

Although previous studies generally demonstrate the relevance of E-WOM and price perception to online purchasing, the empirical evidence is not entirely consistent. Positive relationships between E-WOM and Purchase Decision have been reported among Shopee users (Rahmawati et al., 2022; Sari, 2022), while studies examining E-WOM and price perception within the same model have also reported significant relationships with digital purchase decisions (Irawan et al., 2023; Kartawinata et al., 2025). However, E-WOM has not consistently shown an independent significant relationship when online consumer reviews are operationalized separately from the broader E-WOM construct (Al Aluf & Setiyarini, 2025), while variation in the relationship between price perception and purchasing behavior has also been reported across e-commerce settings (Ananta & Pratiwi, 2025). These inconsistencies suggest that the relative relevance of social-digital information and economic evaluation may vary across consumer groups, platforms, products, and market contexts.

An additional gap concerns the geographical context in which these relationships have been examined. Much of the Indonesian evidence has been generated in relatively established consumer markets, including locations in Java such as Surabaya and Malang (Irawan et al., 2023; Kuswanto et al., 2019), while evidence from geographically peripheral markets in Eastern Indonesia remains comparatively limited. This distinction is relevant not merely as a geographical difference. Research from Eastern Indonesia indicates that younger consumers actively use online consumer information in their purchasing activities (Akbar et al., 2023), while research on maritime logistics in Eastern Indonesia identifies distribution inefficiencies, freight costs, and inter-island connectivity as important characteristics of the regional economic environment (Amin et al., 2021).

These characteristics are particularly relevant for interpreting online consumer behavior in Merauke, South Papua. When products travel over considerable geographical distances, an unsuitable online purchase may involve not only uncertainty regarding product suitability but also additional time and economic inconvenience related to delivery, replacement, or return. Under such conditions, E-WOM may become particularly useful for reducing information uncertainty, while price perception may become salient because consumers evaluate the economic sacrifice of a transaction in relation to affordability, product benefits, and overall transaction value. International e-commerce evidence similarly indicates that logistics performance and price-related evaluations can influence consumers' subsequent behavioral responses (Do et al., 2023). Importantly, shipping cost, delivery duration, and logistics quality were not directly modeled in the present study; these conditions are therefore treated as theoretically relevant contextual characteristics rather than empirically tested determinants.

Accordingly, the contribution of this study does not rest on proposing entirely new constructs or claiming that the relationships between E-WOM, price perception, and purchase-related behavior have never been examined. Instead, the study provides a contextual empirical extension by examining whether these established predictors remain relevant and how their relative statistical contributions differ within an underrepresented Eastern Indonesian e-commerce setting. Focusing on Universitas Musamus students in Merauke enables the study to examine social-digital information and economic evaluation within a consumer setting characterized by geographical and logistical conditions that differ from many markets represented in previous Indonesian research. Therefore, this study examines the relationships of E-WOM and price perception with purchase-related behavioral response among Universitas Musamus students using Shopee and compares the relative statistical contribution of these

predictors within the estimated model.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1. Theory of consumption values

The theory of consumption values (TCV) provides the primary theoretical foundation of this study. TCV explains that consumer choice may be influenced by functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional values, whose relative importance varies across purchasing situations (Sheth et al., 1991). Subsequent studies confirm that these values remain relevant across different consumer and digital-market contexts (Mason et al., 2023; Tanrikulu, 2021).

In this study, E-WOM primarily provides social and epistemic value because consumers obtain information and social validation from other users' experiences. Price perception primarily reflects functional value, as consumers evaluate affordability, expected quality, alternative offers, and anticipated benefits. TCV therefore explains why E-WOM and price perception may contribute differently to purchase-related behavior.

2.2. Stimulus–organism–response as a supporting conceptual perspective

The stimulus–organism–response (SOR) framework is used as a supporting conceptual perspective rather than as a fully tested theoretical model. SOR proposes that external environmental stimuli are interpreted through consumers' internal cognitive or affective states before behavioral responses emerge (Jacoby, 2002).

Digital-consumer research supports the positioning of E-WOM as an external information stimulus whose effects depend on internal consumer evaluation (Kunja et al., 2022; Yadav et al., 2022). In contrast, price perception represents a subjective evaluation rather than an objective price cue because consumers assess affordability, price–quality correspondence, competitiveness, and benefits. This positioning is consistent with Lo et al., (2022), who identified price perception as part of consumers' cognitive evaluation in digital commerce.

Accordingly, this study positions E-WOM as the stimulus, price perception as an internal cognitive/economic evaluation associated with the organism, and purchase-related behavioral response (PRBR) as the response. However, the model does not estimate a sequential E-WOM → price perception → PRBR pathway. Therefore, the study does not claim to test the complete SOR mechanism.

2.3. Electronic word of mouth

Electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) refers to consumer-generated communication about products, services, brands, or companies that is disseminated through digital platforms (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). E-WOM enables prospective consumers to access evaluations and experiences from other users before completing a purchase.

E-WOM is measured through intensity, valence of opinion, and content (Goyette et al., 2010; Rahmawati et al., 2022). Intensity reflects the extent to which consumers access online information, valence of opinion represents positive or negative evaluations, and content refers to information concerning product alternatives, quality, price, and transaction-related considerations.

Meta-analytic evidence indicates that the quality, usefulness, and credibility of E-WOM are relevant to consumers' purchasing intentions (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Mainardes et al. (2023) similarly show that credible E-WOM can influence consumer attitudes and purchase intention. However, empirical findings vary across contexts, particularly when online reviews are treated separately from the broader E-WOM construct (Al Aluf & Setiyarini, 2025).

2.4. Price perception

Price perception refers to consumers' subjective evaluation of the monetary sacrifice required to obtain a product. It differs from objective price because consumers interpret the same monetary amount differently depending on purchasing power, expected quality, competing alternatives, and perceived benefits (Dodds et al., 1991; Zeithaml, 1988).

This study measures price perception through affordability of price with purchasing power, conformity of price with quality, price competitiveness, and suitability of price with benefits (Irawan et al., 2023). These dimensions indicate that consumers evaluate not merely whether a price is high or low, but whether the economic sacrifice is justified by the expected value.

Within TCV, price perception represents functional value. Within the supporting SOR perspective, it represents an internal cognitive evaluation rather than an external stimulus. Previous e-commerce studies generally report positive relationships between price perception and purchasing behavior, although their magnitude varies across contexts (Cahyono et al., 2024; Irawan et al., 2023; Kartawinata et al., 2025).

2.5. Purchase-related behavioral response

The dependent construct is conceptualized as purchase-related behavioral response (PRBR). This broader term is used because the empirical instrument captures not only confidence in purchasing but also habitual platform use, recommendation, and repurchase.

A distinction is necessary between an initial purchase decision and post-purchase behavior. Recommendation and repurchase generally occur after consumers have accumulated purchase experience and therefore should not be interpreted narrowly as indicators of the initial purchase decision. Meilatinova, (2021) similarly treats repurchase and word-of-mouth intentions as post-purchase behavioral responses.

Accordingly, PRBR in this study captures four manifestations: purchase confidence, habitual use of Shopee as a purchasing channel, willingness to recommend satisfactory products or sellers, and willingness to repurchase after a satisfactory experience. This conceptualization provides a more appropriate representation of the behavioral outcomes measured by the instrument.

2.6. Hypotheses development

2.6.1. Electronic word of mouth and purchase-related behavioral response

E-WOM can reduce uncertainty by providing information from previous consumers concerning product quality, suitability, and transaction experience. From TCV, E-WOM contributes social and epistemic value, while from SOR it represents an external social-digital stimulus that consumers interpret before responding behaviorally.

Previous studies generally report positive relationships between E-WOM and online purchasing behavior (Rahmawati et al., 2022; Sari, 2022), although inconsistent findings remain across different operationalizations and research contexts (Al Aluf & Setiyarini, 2025). Therefore, we formulate the first hypothesis as follows:

H1: Electronic word of mouth is positively associated with purchase-related behavioral response.

2.6.2. Price perception and purchase-related behavioral response

Price perception is relevant because consumers evaluate whether the economic sacrifice required for a purchase is acceptable relative to their financial capacity, expected quality, alternative offers, and anticipated benefits. This evaluation reflects functional value in TCV and an internal cognitive evaluation within the supporting SOR perspective.

Previous e-commerce studies generally demonstrate positive relationships between price

perception and consumer purchasing behavior (Cahyono et al., 2024; Irawan et al., 2023; Kartawinata et al., 2025). Thus, we formulate the second hypothesis as follows:

H2: Price perception is positively associated with purchase-related behavioral response.

2.7. Research framework

Based on TCV and the supporting SOR perspective, E-WOM and price perception are examined as complementary predictors of PRBR. E-WOM represents external social-digital information, whereas price perception represents consumers' internal cognitive and economic evaluation.

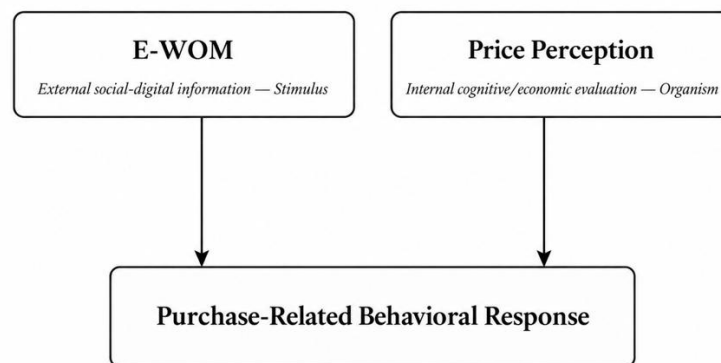


Figure 1. Research framework

The SOR classifications indicate the conceptual positioning of the constructs. The empirical model examines the direct associations of E-WOM and price perception with purchase-related behavioral response and does not test a sequential stimulus–organism–response mediation mechanism.

3. Research methods

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional associative design to examine the relationships of electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) and price perception with purchase-related behavioral response (PRBR). The design was intended to estimate statistical associations rather than establish causal relationships because the data were collected at a single point in time using non-probability sampling. The study was conducted at Universitas Musamus, Merauke, South Papua, from June to July 2026.

The population consisted of active Universitas Musamus students who used Shopee. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling and were required to be active students who had completed at least two Shopee transactions during the previous three months. A total of 191 respondents met these criteria. Sample adequacy was evaluated using Green's (1991) regression guideline of $N \geq 104 + m$ for testing individual predictors. With two predictors, the minimum requirement was 106 respondents; therefore, the final sample exceeded this criterion.

Data were collected through an online questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). E-WOM was measured using 11 items representing intensity, valence of opinion, and content, adapted from Rahmawati et al. (2022). Price perception was measured using four items covering affordability, price–quality correspondence, price competitiveness, and price–benefit suitability, adapted from Irawan et al. (2023). PRBR was measured using four items reflecting purchase confidence, habitual use of Shopee, willingness to recommend, and willingness to repurchase following satisfactory prior experience. The dependent construct was labelled PRBR because recommendation and repurchase represent broader post-purchase behavioral responses rather than the initial purchase decision alone.

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25. The original analytical procedure included item-validity, reliability, residual-normality, multicollinearity, and heteroskedasticity assessments. Item validity was evaluated using Pearson item-total correlations, internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha, multicollinearity using Tolerance and VIF, and heteroskedasticity using the Glejser test. However, because the complete item-level dataset and several original diagnostic outputs were no longer available during manuscript revision, the revised manuscript reports only statistics that could be verified from the retained analytical records.

Multiple linear regression was used to estimate the relationships between E-WOM, price perception, and PRBR: $PRBR = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (E-WOM) + \beta_2 (\text{price perception}) + \varepsilon$. Partial t-tests were used to evaluate H1 and H2, while the F-test was used only to assess the overall significance of the regression model and not as a separate theoretical hypothesis. Model explanatory power was assessed using R² and Adjusted R² with statistical significance evaluated at $p < .05$.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Respondent characteristics

The final analytical sample consisted of 191 respondents who met the study criteria. Women represented the majority of the sample, with 150 respondents (78.5%), while 41 respondents (21.5%) were men. Most respondents were aged 19–22 years (158; 82.7%), followed by those aged 23–25 years (30; 15.7%) and over 25 years (3; 1.6%). Respondents were drawn from all six faculties at Universitas Musamus, with the faculty of economics and business contributing the largest group (66 respondents), followed by the faculty of engineering (44 respondents).

Most respondents reported monthly allowances or income between Rp500,000 and Rp2,500,000 (131 respondents). Fashion was the most frequently purchased product category through Shopee (124 respondents), followed by skincare and cosmetics (37 respondents). Regarding purchasing experience, 114 respondents had completed two Shopee transactions during the previous three months, 45 had completed three to five transactions, and 32 had completed more than five transactions. Thus, the sample primarily represents young university consumers with recent and recurring Shopee purchasing experience.

4.2. Measurement and regression diagnostic reporting

The original manuscript specified item-validity, reliability, normality, multicollinearity, and heteroskedasticity assessments before regression analysis. However, the complete item-level dataset and several original diagnostic outputs were no longer available during manuscript revision. Accordingly, numerical validity, reliability, residual-normality, and heteroskedasticity statistics are not retrospectively reconstructed to avoid reporting unverifiable values.

Multicollinearity could be derived from the retained regression statistics. The approximate VIF values were 1.920 for E-WOM and 1.924 for price perception, corresponding to tolerance values of 0.521 and 0.520, respectively. These values indicate no problematic multicollinearity. The unavailability of the remaining archived diagnostic statistics is acknowledged as a study limitation.

4.3. Multiple linear regression analysis

Multiple linear regression was used to estimate the relationships of E-WOM and price perception with purchase-related behavioral response (PRBR). The retained regression coefficients are presented in Table 1.

The estimated regression equation was: $PRBR = -3.516 + 0.208 (E-WOM) + 0.758 (\text{price}$

perception) + ϵ . The constant of -3.516 represents the mathematical intercept and is not interpreted substantively because a score of zero falls outside the measurement range of the constructs. Holding price perception constant, a one-unit increase in E-WOM was associated with a 0.208-unit increase in PRBR. Holding E-WOM constant, a one-unit increase in price perception was associated with a 0.758-unit increase in PRBR. The standardized coefficients further indicate that price perception made a considerably stronger relative statistical contribution than E-WOM within the estimated model.

Table 1. Multiple linear regression results

Predictor	B	Std. error	Standardized β
Constant	-3.516	1.145	–
E-WOM	0.208	0.036	0.266
Price perception	0.758	0.051	0.686

4.4. Hypothesis testing and overall model assessment

The partial relationships proposed in H_1 and H_2 were evaluated using t-tests. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Partial hypothesis testing results

Predictor	t-value	p-value	Decision
E-WOM	5.800	< .001	H_1 supported
Price perception	14.939	< .001	H_2 supported

E-WOM was positively and significantly associated with PRBR ($B = 0.208$, $\beta = 0.266$, $t = 5.800$, $p < .001$). Accordingly, H_1 was supported. Price perception was also positively and significantly associated with PRBR ($B = 0.758$, $\beta = 0.686$, $t = 14.939$, $p < .001$); therefore, H_2 was supported. The higher standardized coefficient of price perception indicates that its relative statistical contribution was substantially greater than that of E-WOM when both predictors were included in the same model. The F-test was retained as an assessment of the overall significance of the regression model rather than as a separate theoretical hypothesis.

Table 3. Overall regression model significance

Model	df	F-value	p-value
Regression	2, 188	362.746	< .001

The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(2, 188) = 362.746$, $p < .001$, indicating that the set of predictors jointly contributed to explaining variation in PRBR. This test is interpreted solely as an assessment of overall model significance. The explanatory ability of the model is presented in Table 4.

The model produced $R = 0.891$, $R^2 = 0.794$, and adjusted $R^2 = 0.792$. Thus, E-WOM and price perception accounted for 79.2% of the observed variance in PRBR within the analyzed sample, while the remaining variance was associated with factors outside the estimated model.

4.5. Discussion

4.5.1. Electronic word of mouth and purchase-related behavioral response

The positive association between E-WOM and PRBR indicates that consumer-generated information remains relevant to students' behavioral responses on Shopee. Reviews, recommendations, ratings, comments, and other consumers' experiences provide information that can assist prospective buyers in evaluating products when direct physical inspection is not

possible. Meta-analytic evidence similarly demonstrates that characteristics of E-WOM, including argument quality, message valence, usefulness, and trust in the message, contribute to consumers' intention to buy (Ismagilova et al., 2020).

Table 4. Model summary and coefficient of determination

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. error of the estimate
0.891	0.794	0.792	1.506

From the theory of consumption values perspective, E-WOM provides epistemic value by supplying product-related knowledge and social value by allowing consumers to observe the experiences and evaluations of other buyers. Within the supporting stimulus–organism–response perspective, E-WOM can therefore be conceptualized as an external social-digital stimulus whose relevance depends on how consumers interpret the information received. The present findings should not, however, be interpreted as evidence that E-WOM automatically produces behavioral responses because the internal processing mechanism was not directly estimated.

The standardized coefficient for E-WOM ($\beta=0.266$) was substantially smaller than that of price perception. Thus, social-digital information was statistically relevant but was not the most salient predictor in the present model. This result is consistent with previous Indonesian e-commerce research reporting a positive relationship between E-WOM and consumer purchasing behavior (Rahmawati et al., 2022; Kartawinata et al., 2025). At the same time, differences in the magnitude of E-WOM relationships across studies indicate that its relevance may depend on consumer characteristics, information quality, product category, and the purchasing context.

The Merauke setting provides an additional contextual interpretation. For consumers purchasing products from geographically distant sellers, an unsuitable choice may involve not only product uncertainty but also additional time and inconvenience associated with delivery, replacement, or return. Consequently, information from previous buyers may have contextual value in reducing uncertainty before completing a transaction. This interpretation remains tentative because logistics variables were not directly included in the empirical model.

4.5.2. Price perception and purchase-related behavioral response

Price perception demonstrated the strongest relative statistical contribution to PRBR ($\beta=0.686$). This finding indicates that students' behavioral responses were more closely associated with their evaluations of affordability, price–quality correspondence, competitiveness, and expected benefits than with social-digital information alone.

The finding is theoretically consistent with the theory of consumption values because price perception reflects the evaluation of functional value. Consumers do not evaluate only the nominal amount charged for a product; they also consider whether the required sacrifice is appropriate in relation to purchasing power, expected quality, available alternatives, and anticipated benefits (Dodds et al., 1991; Zeithaml, 1988). Meta-analytic evidence further demonstrates that the relative importance of consumption values varies across consumer behaviors and contexts rather than remaining constant across purchasing situations (Mason et al., 2023).

The sample characteristics make this finding particularly relevant. Most respondents reported monthly allowances or income between Rp500,000 and Rp2,500,000, suggesting that economic evaluation is likely to be meaningful for this student segment. In addition, the research instrument operationalized the price–benefit evaluation by asking respondents to consider total purchasing expenditure, including shipping costs, promotions, and discounts. Thus, price perception in this study reflects a broader assessment of transaction value rather

than merely the listed product price.

The geographical context further strengthens the relevance of this interpretation. Research on maritime logistics in Eastern Indonesia has documented distribution inefficiencies and transportation-cost challenges associated with inter-island movement of goods (Amin et al., 2021). Although that study was not conducted specifically in Merauke, it provides evidence that geographically peripheral markets in Eastern Indonesia can face structural logistics constraints that affect the movement and cost of goods. Accordingly, consumers in Merauke may evaluate an online purchase in terms of its overall economic value rather than product price alone.

Nevertheless, the stronger price perception coefficient should not be interpreted as evidence that shipping costs or logistics conditions caused the observed relationship. Delivery time, shipping cost, and logistics service quality were not modeled as separate predictors in the present study. These conditions therefore provide a contextual explanation that should be tested directly in future research.

The result is consistent with previous Indonesian e-commerce evidence showing a positive relationship between price perception and purchasing behavior (Irawan et al., 2023; Kartawinata et al., 2025). More importantly, the current study extends this evidence by showing that economic-value evaluation had a substantially greater relative statistical contribution than social-digital information within the analyzed student sample.

4.5.3. Overall interpretation of the model

Taken together, the findings indicate that social-digital information and economic evaluation represent complementary but differently weighted considerations in consumers' purchase-related behavioral responses. E-WOM provides information and social validation derived from other consumers, whereas price perception reflects an internal assessment of the economic value associated with the transaction.

This pattern is consistent with the central proposition of the theory of consumption values that different consumption values may contribute with different levels of importance depending on the behavioral outcome and purchasing context (Sheth et al., 1991). The meta-analysis of Mason et al. (2023) similarly indicates that contextual and methodological factors can alter the relative contribution of consumption values to consumer behavior. In the present sample, functional and economic evaluation showed greater statistical salience than social-digital information.

The findings are also compatible with, but do not constitute a complete test of, the SOR framework. E-WOM can be conceptually positioned as an external social-digital stimulus, price perception as an internal cognitive and economic evaluation associated with the organism, and PRBR as the response. However, because the empirical model did not estimate a sequential E-WOM → price perception → PRBR pathway or another mediation mechanism, the findings should not be interpreted as empirical validation of the complete stimulus–organism–response process.

The contribution of the study therefore lies primarily in contextual empirical extension rather than in identifying previously unknown relationships. The results demonstrate that established digital-consumer predictors remain relevant among students in an underrepresented Eastern Indonesian setting, while their relative contributions differ considerably. In particular, the stronger role of price perception suggests that consumer behavior in geographically peripheral digital markets may warrant greater attention to total economic value, purchasing power, and transaction-related costs. These mechanisms should be investigated directly in subsequent research rather than inferred from geographical context alone.

5. Conclusions and suggestion

5.1. Conclusions

This study found that E-WOM and price perception were positively and significantly associated with purchase-related behavioral response among Universitas Musamus students using Shopee. Price perception showed a stronger relative contribution ($\beta=0.686$) than E-WOM ($\beta=0.266$), while the model explained 79.2% of the variance in the dependent construct. The findings indicate that both social-digital information and economic evaluation are relevant, although economic considerations appear more salient within the analyzed student sample.

The findings support the theory of consumption values and are conceptually consistent with SOR, with E-WOM positioned as an external stimulus, price perception as an internal cognitive evaluation, and purchase-related behavioral response as the response. However, the study does not test a complete sequential SOR mechanism.

5.2. Suggestions

Shopee sellers targeting student consumers should prioritize transparent and value-consistent pricing while also maintaining credible and informative consumer reviews. Particular attention should be given to affordability, price–quality correspondence, promotions, and total transaction costs.

Future research should involve broader consumer groups, incorporate logistics-related variables such as shipping cost and delivery time, and test a complete SOR mechanism using mediating variables such as perceived value or trust. The findings should be interpreted cautiously because the study used purposive sampling, a single-university sample, cross-sectional data, and self-reported responses.

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