

Webrooming and Pure Online Shopping Behavior of Skincare Consumers in Indonesia

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Abstract

Based on social cognitive theory, this study examines the influence of content marketing and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on the purchasing decisions of skincare consumers. It also investigates whether the effects of content marketing and e-WOM on purchasing decisions differ significantly between pure online shoppers and webroomers. A quantitative approach was used to examine the causal relationship among the study variables. Likewise, cross-sectional data were purposively collected from 298 skintific users in Sumenep Regency, Indonesia. SmartPLS 4.0 was employed for analysis. This study found that both content marketing and e-WOM significantly influence skincare purchasing decisions, with no notable difference between pure online shoppers and webroomers. The results suggest that digital content and peer-generated reviews have become central touchpoints in high-involvement product decisions, transcending the physical-digital shopping divide. Findings reveal converging digital consumer behaviors, urging brands to adopt consistent, credible, and engaging digital strategies to build trust and drive purchase intentions.

Keywords: Content marketing, e-WOM, purchase decision, pure online, shopping behavior, webrooming

Introduction

The global skincare industry has witnessed unprecedented growth in the digital era, driven by increasing consumer awareness, rising disposable incomes, and the proliferation of online platforms. As of 2024, the global skincare market was valued at over USD 150 billion, with the Asia-Pacific region accounting for a substantial share owing to its burgeoning middle class, tech-savvy youth, and deepening internet penetration (Statista, 2024). Among the key players in this transformation is Indonesia, which, as the fourth most populous country, is rapidly emerging as a digital powerhouse. With an internet penetration rate exceeding 70% and 67.5% of users actively researching products online, Indonesia represents a fertile ground for evolving consumer behaviors, particularly in sectors like skincare, where digital engagement is high (Ahdiat, 2022).

One of the most salient shifts in consumer behavior in this domain is the rise of hybrid shopping journeys, notably webrooming, where consumers search online but purchase offline, and pure online shopping, involving both product search and purchase online. This behavioral bifurcation challenges marketers to develop strategies that resonate across digital and physical touchpoints. In this context, content marketing and e-WOM have emerged as critical digital levers influencing consumer purchase decisions. Well-designed content fosters brand storytelling, educates consumers, and creates emotional resonance (Pulizzi, 2012; Hollebeek & Macky, 2019), while e-WOM, often in the form of peer reviews, influencer opinions, and social recommendations, builds social trust and perceived credibility, thereby shaping consumer attitudes and reducing decision-making uncertainty (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

While these digital strategies are widely acknowledged for their influence, consumer response to content marketing and e-WOM is not monolithic. It may vary significantly depending on whether the consumer is a pure online shopper, who lacks tactile interaction and thus relies more on digital cues (Lal & Sarvary, 1999), or a webroomer, who seeks confirmation from online information but values offline validation through physical inspection and experiential assurance (Flavián et al., 2016). This moderate role of shopping behavior, particularly in tactile product categories like skincare, remains empirically underexplored, especially in emerging digital economies.

Despite the global relevance of these themes, existing literature is disproportionately Western-centric. For instance, over 50% of empirical research on webrooming has focused on North American and European markets, often neglecting the contextual nuances of countries like Indonesia, where digital literacy, retail infrastructure, and consumer trust exhibit distinct dynamics (Sahu et al., 2021). Furthermore, prior studies tend to isolate content marketing and e-WOM, overlooking their joint influence and interaction with shopping behavior, especially in industries where product quality perception is inherently multisensory, as is the case in skincare consumption.

Despite the explosive digital transformation in Indonesia's skincare market, scholarly understanding of how content marketing and e-WOM jointly influence consumer purchasing decisions, especially under varying shopping behavior typologies, is still nascent. The nuanced

interplay between these digital strategies and consumer behavior modes (i.e., webrooming vs. pure online) has not been systematically examined. This gap is particularly pronounced in emerging markets, where consumer trust in digital channels and preference for physical interaction coexist. As a result, marketers may be deploying content or e-WOM initiatives without fully understanding their contextual effectiveness, leading to suboptimal engagement and conversion outcomes.

To fulfill the knowledge gap, this study examines the influence of content marketing and e-WOM on the purchasing decisions of skincare consumers. In addition, it also investigates whether the effects of content marketing and e-WOM on purchasing decisions differ significantly between pure online shoppers and webroomers. Similarly, this study advances theoretical understanding and offers empirically grounded insights into how content-driven and socially mediated digital marketing strategies influence the purchase decisions of skincare consumers in the context of emerging digitally hybrid economies. It holds practical value for marketers in emerging markets by guiding strategy alignment with hybrid consumer shopping patterns in the skincare industry.

Literature review

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

SCT, developed by Bandura, provides a robust framework for understanding consumer behavior in digitally mediated environments (Bandura, 2009). It posits that behavior is shaped through the dynamic interaction of personal factors, behavioral patterns, and environmental influences, commonly referred to as triadic reciprocal determinism. In the context of digital commerce, SCT highlights how cognitive evaluations (e.g., beliefs, expectations), social influences (e.g., peer opinions, e-WOM), and personal experiences (e.g., past online purchases) collectively inform consumer decision-making (Yakut, 2019).

Applied to skincare shopping, SCT offers a valuable lens to understand the behavior of both pure online shoppers and webroomers. Pure online consumers often rely heavily on digital content and peer-generated information to compensate for the lack of physical product interaction (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010), while webroomers integrate online information with offline experiences to reduce uncertainty (Yadav et al., 2024). These behaviors reflect SCT's assertion that decision-making is a cognitively mediated process shaped by observational learning, self-efficacy, and perceived outcomes. Thus, SCT effectively underpins the study's investigation into how content marketing and e-WOM influence purchasing decisions, moderated by the consumer's shopping behavior orientation.

Shopping Behavior

Shopping behavior encompasses the cognitive and behavioral processes consumers engage in when evaluating products, making purchase decisions, and interacting with retail environments, both physical and digital (Manass et al., 2020). In the multichannel retail era, four primary shopping behaviors have emerged: pure offline, pure online, webrooming, and

showrooming. Pure offline involves the complete purchase journey (i.e., search, evaluation, and transaction) within physical stores, whereas pure online refers to end-to-end digital shopping, where consumers search, evaluate, and purchase products entirely via online platforms (Sayyida et al., 2021).

Webrooming and showrooming represent hybrid behaviors. Webrooming occurs when consumers search for information online but complete the purchase offline, often to validate quality or seek immediate gratification. In contrast, showrooming involves in-store product exploration followed by an online purchase, typically driven by better pricing or convenience (Manss et al., 2020). Among these, webrooming and pure online shopping have emerged as the dominant behaviors in today's retail landscape, especially in categories like skincare, where consumers seek both digital assurance and physical validation (Sayyida et al., 2021).

Webroomers tend to make more informed decisions, often engaging in extensive online research to compare product features, prices, and reviews before purchasing offline (Arora & Sahney, 2019; Hartini & Hidayati, 2021).

Content Marketing

Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract, engage, and retain a clearly defined audience, ultimately driving profitable customer action (Charviandi et al., 2023). Unlike traditional promotional tactics, content marketing emphasizes informative and value-driven communication, fostering trust, brand loyalty, and long-term customer relationships. With consumers increasingly relying on digital information during their purchase journeys, content marketing has become an indispensable tool, particularly in experience-based categories like skincare.

Content can take various formats, including text, video, audio, infographics, and interactive media, and is disseminated through digital channels such as search engines, websites, email campaigns, and social media platforms (Shadrina & Sulistyanto, 2022; Charviandi et al., 2023). Empirical research indicates that 92% of marketers consider content as a business asset, and companies that prioritize content marketing report 6x higher conversion rates compared to those that do not (Content Marketing Institute, 2023).

The effectiveness of content marketing hinges on key attributes, such as relevance, accuracy, perceived value, ease of understanding, searchability, and message consistency, which collectively enhance information quality and user engagement (Indriawan & Santoso, 2023; Milhinhos, 2015). These dimensions are especially critical in the skincare sector, where consumers seek educational and credible content to evaluate product efficacy, ingredients, and suitability for skin types before making informed decisions.

e-WOM

e-WOM refers to the digital transmission of consumer-generated opinions and experiences about products, services, brands, or companies, shared through online platforms and accessible to a broad audience (Ayesha et al., 2022; Ismagilova et al., 2017). As a form of informal yet influential marketing communication, e-WOM utilizes diverse media formats, such as written reviews, images, and videos, to shape consumer perceptions and support business objectives.

Unlike traditional word-of-mouth, e-WOM is amplified by digital technology, allowing for greater reach, speed, and permanence in the dissemination of consumer opinions. Its strategic importance is especially prominent in the skincare industry, where consumers often rely on the experiences and endorsements of peers to assess product quality, safety, and effectiveness before making purchase decisions.

The effectiveness of e-WOM is commonly assessed through three key indicators: intensity (the volume or frequency of messages), opinion value (the perceived credibility and usefulness of shared content), and content quality (clarity, depth, and informativeness) (Goyette et al., 2010; Jayanti et al., 2023). In highly competitive and sensory-driven markets like skincare, e-WOM acts as a critical trust-building mechanism, particularly for pure online shoppers and webroomers, who depend on peer-generated content to reduce uncertainty and risk.

Purchasing Decision

Purchasing decisions refer to the process of evaluating and selecting from various alternatives to make a final buying choice (Sawhani, 2021). This process involves multiple stages, beginning with problem recognition and culminating in the actual purchase transaction (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Key indicators of purchasing decisions include product choice, brand choice, distribution channel choice, purchase amount, purchase timing, and payment method (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

Consumers assess different product options, weighing the benefits and quality of each brand. Their interest in a product, the alternatives they consider, and their understanding of the product's value all contribute to their final choice. Brand selection reflects both awareness and preference, which significantly shape the overall purchasing decision.

Development of Hypothesis

Content Marketing and Purchase Decision: In the skincare industry, high-quality content such as blog articles, video tutorials, and product guides plays a pivotal role in assisting consumers throughout their decision-making journey (Nurohmah et al., 2024). Such content not only enhances product understanding but also increases brand awareness and strengthens consumer trust (Risdiyanto & Bambang, 2024; Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

Empirical evidence highlights the effectiveness of content marketing in shaping consumer perceptions and encouraging informed purchases, particularly in digital environments where consumers rely heavily on online resources (Santy & Andriani, 2023). By delivering consistent and relevant information, firms can reduce decision-making uncertainty and positively influence purchase behavior.

H1: *Content marketing has a significant positive influence on the purchasing decisions of skincare consumers.*

e-WOM and Purchase Decision: e-WOM significantly shapes consumer decision-making by influencing brand perception, reducing uncertainty, and enhancing trust, especially in product categories like skincare, where quality and safety are paramount (Rahmawati et al., 2022). Through online reviews, ratings, and peer recommendations, e-WOM provides authentic and experience-based insights that guide consumers toward or away from specific products.

Empirical research highlights that consumers rely heavily on e-WOM when evaluating skincare products, particularly because of its perceived credibility and accessibility (Santy & Andriani, 2023). The volume and valence of shared information, whether through forums, review platforms, or social media, serve as critical informational cues that influence both product consideration and purchase intent. In digital-first markets, positive e-WOM has been shown to improve consumer confidence and trigger actual purchase behavior.

H2: *e-WOM has a significant positive influence on the purchasing decisions of skincare consumers.*

Differences in Shopping Behavior: Pure Online vs. Webrooming and their Influence on Purchase Decision: Consumer shopping behavior has undergone a significant transformation in the digital era, giving rise to diverse patterns such as pure online shopping and webrooming. Pure online shopping refers to a complete end-to-end online purchase process, from product search to payment, without any physical product interaction (Manss et al., 2020). Conversely, webrooming represents a hybrid pattern in which consumers gather product information online but prefer to complete the purchase offline after in-store evaluation (Flavián et al., 2020).

This behavioral divergence is often driven by consumers' sensitivity to risk and desire for product assurance. Empirical studies show that individuals with lower risk perception are more likely to engage in pure online shopping, valuing convenience and speed, whereas those with higher risk aversion tend to adopt webrooming to validate their choices physically before committing to purchase (Zhuang et al., 2018). Notably, webrooming enhances consumer satisfaction by leveraging the strengths of both digital exploration and offline reassurance (Flavián et al., 2016).

The relevance of these behaviors is especially pronounced in the skincare industry, where tactile and sensory experiences influence consumer confidence. In the Indonesian context, marked by rapid digital adoption and evolving retail preferences, these behavioral shifts are further

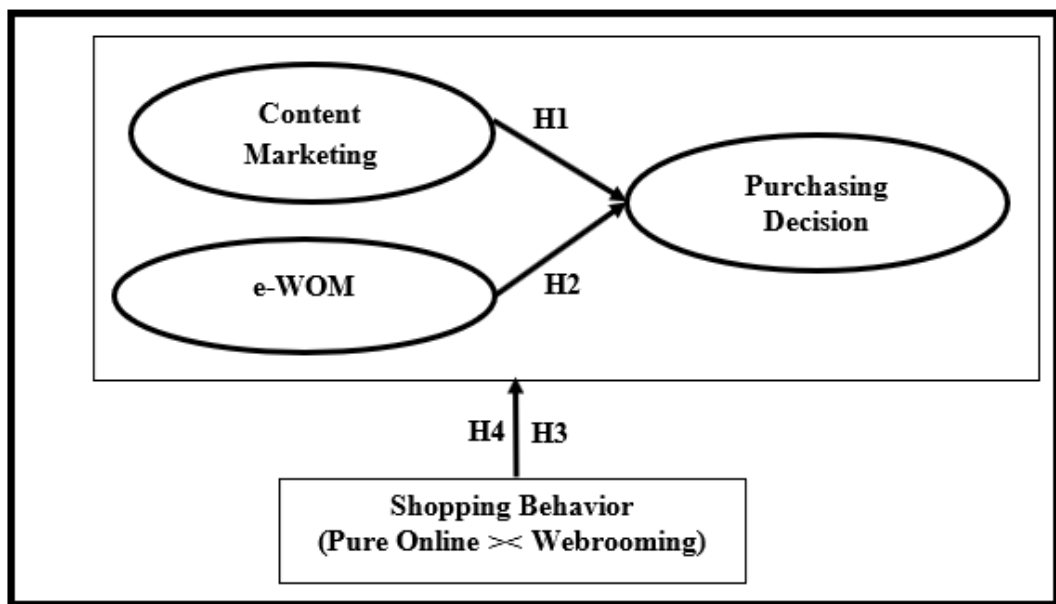
accentuated (Ardani, 2022). Consequently, consumer responses to marketing stimuli such as content marketing and e-WOM may vary depending on whether the consumer prefers a purely digital journey or a hybrid one.

H3: *The influence of content marketing on purchasing decisions differs significantly between pure online shoppers and webroomers.*

H4: *The influence of e-WOM on purchasing decisions differs significantly between pure online shoppers and webroomers.*

These behavioral distinctions are reflected in the conceptual framework (Figure 1), which maps the influence of content marketing and e-WOM on purchasing decisions across the two primary shopping behaviors: pure online and webrooming.

Figure 1
Research Framework



Research Methods

This study used a quantitative approach to explore the causal links between the variables under study. The focus was on Skintific consumers, a skincare brand originating in Canada that has rapidly expanded into Asian beauty markets (Purnama et al., 2024). Data were primarily sourced from content marketing and e-WOM. Participants had to meet specific criteria: they needed to be at least 18 years old, have purchased a Skintific product in the past three months, and have experience with either online shopping or webrooming for skin care products.

A purposive sampling method was employed to select only those consumers who met the criteria. Data were collected using a structured, self-administered online survey distributed via Google Forms. A total of 298 respondents provided the cross-sectional data. The survey was initially tested on 30 individuals to ensure that it was clear, reliable, and valid in terms of construct. Feedback led to minor adjustments to improve understanding and eliminate ambiguities. All survey items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This study adhered to the ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects. Digital informed consent was obtained from all participants before they participated in the survey. No personal identifiers were collected, ensuring that participation was anonymous, confidential, and voluntary throughout the study.

Result and Analysis

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

A total of 298 valid responses were collected for the study. Of the respondents, 79% were female, reflecting the gendered nature of skincare product consumption. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 32 years, indicating a predominantly young consumer segment. In terms of geographic distribution, 45% resided in rural areas, 35% in urban centers, and the remaining respondents were located in the island regions of Sumenep Regency. Regarding educational background, the majority (49%) had completed high school, suggesting that most respondents represent an emerging group of educated, young skincare consumers with digital exposure.

Measurement Model

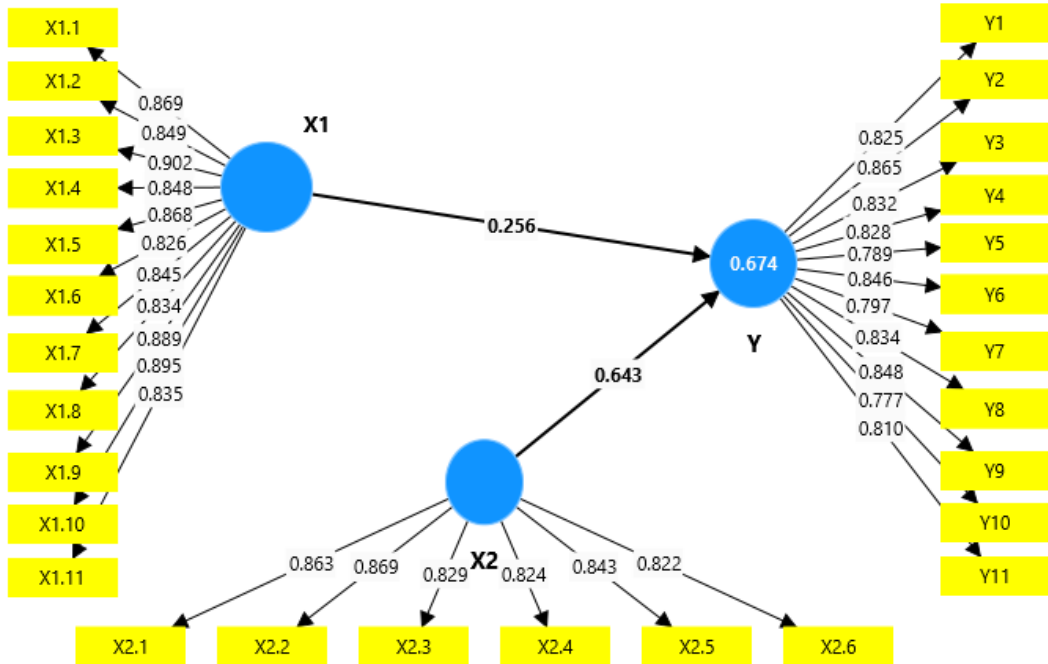
To ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs, a two-step evaluation of the measurement model was conducted following established guidelines for PLS-SEM. The reliability test aims to measure the internal consistency of the indicators used to represent latent variables. Internal consistency reflects the extent to which the items consistently represent the same underlying construct across repeated measurements.

In this study, internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Composite Reliability (CR), and rho_A, as recommended for PLS-SEM applications. The results revealed that all constructs exceeded the minimum threshold value of 0.70 for CA, CR, and rho_A, indicating high reliability. This confirms that the indicators used for measuring each latent variable, content marketing, e-WOM, and purchase decision, demonstrated strong internal consistency.

The validity of the measurement model was assessed through both convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was examined using outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). An item exhibits acceptable convergent validity if its loading exceeds 0.708, and a construct demonstrates convergent validity if its AVE is greater than 0.50.

The findings revealed that all outer loadings ranged between 0.715 and 0.902, surpassing the recommended threshold. Additionally, AVE values ranged from 0.627 to 0.740 across constructs in both consumer behavior groups (webrooming and pure online), thus confirming adequate convergent validity.

Figure 2
Path Diagram



To assess discriminant validity, both the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) of Correlations and cross-loading analysis were employed, following the guidelines proposed by Henseler et al. (2016). The HTMT values for all constructs across both consumer behavior groups, webrooming and pure online, were found to be below the conservative threshold of 0.85, indicating that each construct is empirically distinct from the others. This threshold is widely accepted for establishing discriminant validity in PLS-SEM models (Henseler et al., 2016).

Further, the cross-loading analysis demonstrated that each indicator had its highest loading on its respective construct, compared to its correlations with other constructs. This confirms that the indicators are more strongly associated with their designated latent variables than with any other variables in the model. Collectively, these results provide robust evidence of discriminant validity, confirming that the measurement model effectively captures distinct theoretical constructs.

Table 1
Reliability and Validity

Indicators		Outer Loading		Description
		Online	offline	
Content Marketing				
X1.1	Skintific content marketing shares information about skin problems	0.814	0.869	Valid
X1.2	Skintific content marketing helped me find solutions to my skin problems	0.776	0.849	Valid
X1.3	Scientific marketing content contains real information about the product	0.779	0.902	Valid
X1.4	Skintific content marketing explains the product's ingredients and benefits.	0.715	0.848	Valid
X1.5	Skintific content marketing is trusted and reliable	0.827	0.868	Valid
X1.6	Skintific content marketing has provided me with valuable benefits	0.819	0.826	Valid
X1.7	Skintific content marketing is easy to understand	0.821	0.845	Valid
X1.8	Skintific content marketing is presented concisely and clearly.	0.786	0.834	Valid
X1.9	Skintific content marketing is available on all online platforms	0.843	0.889	Valid
X1.10	Skintific content marketing is always uploaded consistently at all times.	0.785	0.895	Valid
X1.11	Skintific content marketing is updated regularly	0.738	0.835	Valid
Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM)				
X2.1	I often read other users' comments when searching for Skintific product information	0.809	0.863	Valid
X2.2	Reviews about Skintific always help me in making purchasing decisions	0.840	0.869	Valid
X2.3	I often consult online forums before purchasing Skintific products	0.832	0.829	Valid
X2.4	Before shopping, I looked at positive reviews from people who had purchased Skintific products	0.74	0.824	Valid
X2.5	Testimonials from Skintific users that I found on online forums increased my confidence in this product	0.836	0.843	Valid

X2.6	Skintific video reviews on online platforms influenced my decision to purchase the product	0.813	0.822	Valid
Purchase Decision				
Y1	I bought products from Skintific because the product choices offered are varied and interesting	0.842	0.825	Valid
Y2	I decided to buy products from Skintific because of the excellence of the products	0.859	0.865	Valid
Y3	I am more confident in purchasing products from Skintific because of the popularity of the brand	0.851	0.832	Valid
Y4	My experience with the Skintific brand makes me prefer it over other brands	0.821	0.828	Valid
Y5	I chose to buy Skintific products because of their availability in various trusted online and offline stores	0.857	0.789	Valid
Y6	Price influences me to purchase Skintific products from a particular distribution channel	0.753	0.846	Valid
Y7	The number of products I purchase varies depending on my needs	0.827	0.797	Valid
Y8	I will increase the number of purchases of Skintific products if I am satisfied with the results	0.714	0.834	Valid
Y9	I bought Skintific products when my stock was almost out	0.788	0.848	Valid
Y10	I buy Skintific products when there are interesting promotions or discounts	0.832	0.777	Valid
Y11	I buy Skintific products when there are interesting promotions or discounts	0.764	0.810	Valid

Structural Model

To evaluate the structural model, collinearity, explanatory power, and model fit were assessed. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all constructs were below the recommended threshold of 5.0, indicating no multicollinearity concerns and ensuring unbiased path coefficient estimates.

The adjusted R^2 value of 0.538 for the purchase decision construct suggests that 53.8% of its variance is explained by content marketing and e-WOM, with the remaining variance attributable to unobserved factors. Model fit was assessed using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), yielding values of 0.054 for the pure online group and 0.050 for the webrooming group. Both values fall below the 0.08 threshold, indicating an acceptable model fit.

Measurement Invariance Assessment (MICOM): The MICOM procedure was applied to test whether the measurement structure is invariant across the two data groups, i.e., pure online and webrooming consumers. Following Henseler et al. (2016), the MICOM process involves three sequential steps: configuration invariance, compositional invariance, and equality of means and variances.

Configuration invariance was established as both groups used identical measurement instruments, data processing procedures, and algorithm settings. Step 2 results confirmed compositional invariance, with all permutation p-values exceeding the 0.05 threshold, indicating no significant differences between the original correlations and their permutation distributions.

As partial measurement invariance was established through steps 1 and 2, multi-group analysis (MGA) is permissible for comparing path coefficients between groups (Cheah et al., 2020).

Table 2
MICOM Step 2

Relationship Between Constructs	Original Correlation	Correlation Permutation Mean	5.00%	Permutation p-values
X1 (Content marketing)	0.999	1.000	0.999	0.174
X2 (E-WOM)	1.000	1.000	0.999	0.339
Y (Purchase decision)	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.189

Hypothesis Testing: Table 3 presents the path coefficient results for hypothesis testing. Content marketing significantly influences purchase decisions in both pure online and webrooming groups, as indicated by p-values below 0.05, supporting H1. Similarly, e-WOM also exerts a significant effect on purchase decisions in both groups, with p-values less than 0.05, thus confirming H2.

Table 3
Path coefficients

Relationship Between Constructs	Pure Online		Webrooming	
	T statistics	P values	t- statistics	p-values
Content Marketing to Purchase Decision	5.234	0.000	2.107	0.035
e-WOM to Purchase Decision	4.966	0.000	5.246	0.000

Tables 4, 5, and 6 present the results of the equality tests for the influence of variables across the pure online and webrooming groups. In all cases, the p-values exceed 0.05 for the effects of content marketing and e-WOM on purchase decisions, indicating no significant differences

between the two groups. This suggests that shopping behavior (pure online vs. webrooming) does not moderate the relationship between content marketing and purchase decisions, nor between e-WOM and purchase decisions. Accordingly, H3 and H4 are rejected.

Table 4
PLS-MGA

Relationship Between Constructs	Difference (Group online - Group offline)	1-tailed (Group online vs Group offline) p value	2-tailed (Group online vs Group offline) p value
Content Marketing to Purchasing Decision	0.122	0.195	0.390
E-WOM to Purchasing Decision	-0.213	0.919	0.162

Table 5
Parametric Test

Relationship Between Constructs	Difference (Group online - Group offline)	t-value (Group online vs Group offline)	p-value (Group online vs Group offline)
Content Marketing to Purchasing Decision	0.122	0.873	0.383
e-WOM to Purchasing Decisions	-0.213	1.432	0.153

Table 6
Welch-Satterthwait Test

Relationship Between Constructs	Difference (Group online - Group offline)	t-value (Group online vs Group offline)	p-value (Group online vs Group offline)
Content Marketing to Purchasing Decisions	0.122	0.865	0.388
e-WOM to Purchasing Decision	-0.213	1.422	0.157

Discussions

This study empirically investigated how content marketing and e-WOM influence the purchase decisions of Skintific skincare consumers in Sumenep Regency, Indonesia. Similarly, it also investigates whether the effects of content marketing and e-WOM on purchasing decisions differ significantly between pure online shoppers and webroomers.

Findings confirm that content marketing significantly affects purchasing decisions. This aligns with prior research indicating that informative, engaging, and educational brand content enhances customer trust and purchase intent (Santy & Andriani, 2023; Mahardini et al., 2022). Consumers valued Skintific's content, i.e., blogs, tutorials, and product guides, as credible and relevant, increasing both product understanding and confidence. This result supports the assertion that high-quality content builds brand resonance and strengthens consumer-brand relationships (Pulizzi & Barrett, 2009). Despite prior assumptions that webroomers need physical product interaction to finalize a decision (Rodríguez et al., 2025), the multi-group analysis revealed no significant difference in the impact of content marketing between webroomers and pure online shoppers. Both consumer types relied equally on content to inform and influence their decisions, suggesting that digital content now plays a critical role across diverse shopping behaviors.

Similarly, e-WOM exhibited a significant positive influence on purchasing decisions. This reinforces prior studies indicating that online reviews, testimonials, and user experiences shape consumer attitudes and behaviors (Jayanti et al., 2023; Prayoga & Mulyandi, 2020). Drawing on SCT, this study demonstrates that consumers are socially and cognitively influenced by others' shared experiences. Positive e-WOM creates vicarious learning and outcome expectancy, increasing confidence in product quality and decision-making (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Orús et al., 2019). Importantly, the effect of e-WOM did not differ between pure online and webrooming consumers. Both groups equally trusted digital reviews, indicating that perceived credibility and social validation from e-WOM transcend the physical-digital divide in shopping channels (Filiari & McLeay, 2014).

The findings collectively suggest that in the context of skincare, a high-involvement category, Sumenep consumers rely heavily on credible online content and peer recommendations, regardless of shopping channel. This convergence in behavior indicates a diminishing distinction between pure online and webrooming paths, where consumers seek consistency and reassurance from digital sources. These results not only validate the centrality of digital touchpoints in the consumer journey but also highlight the need for brands to integrate robust content strategies and proactive e-WOM engagement mechanisms to influence consumer decisions effectively (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Cheung & Lee, 2008).

Conclusions and Implications

This study establishes that both content marketing and e-WOM significantly influence skincare purchasing decisions among consumers in Sumenep Regency, irrespective of whether they shop purely online or engage in webrooming. The findings emphasize the convergence of digital behavior across consumer segments, with both groups relying on informative content and credible peer reviews. These insights highlight the critical role of digital touchpoints in high-involvement product categories like skincare. Notably, the moderating role of shopping behavior was not supported, suggesting a diminishing divide between online and hybrid consumer paths. Brands must therefore prioritize consistent, value-driven digital strategies to shape consumer trust and decision-making across all channels.

Implications

- The study extends SCT in the digital shopping context, confirming that both firm-generated content and peer-shared experiences influence behavior across different consumer paths.
- Skincare marketers must develop engaging, credible, and consistent content while actively managing e-WOM to build trust and guide purchase intent.
- Regulatory bodies should ensure that digital marketing and user-generated content platforms promote transparency, credibility, and data authenticity to protect consumer interests.
- As consumers increasingly rely on e-WOM, promoting digital literacy and responsible online communication becomes essential to avoid misinformation and support informed consumer decision-making.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study offers valuable insights into the influence of content marketing and e-WOM on skincare purchasing decisions, the study also has several limitations. The sample was limited to Skintific users in Sumenep Regency, affecting generalizability. The cross-sectional design restricts understanding of behavioral changes over time, while self-reported data may suffer from recall bias or social desirability effects. The focus on skincare products limits applicability to other industries. Further studies can employ key moderating variables like brand loyalty, price sensitivity, gender, and purchase type. In addition, future research should consider longitudinal and mixed-methods designs, post-purchase behaviors, and product category comparisons to gain deeper and broader insights into evolving consumer decision-making processes.

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Authors' Contribution

Sayyida Sayyida: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Writing- Original Draft, Review and Editing, Visualization, Resources, and Investigation.

Sustri Hartini: Data Analysis, Writing- Original Draft, Review and Editing, Visualization, and Validation.

Sanju Kumar Singh: Conceptualization, Data Collection, Review and Editing, Visualization, Software, and Resources.

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